

WILD WEST

WEEKLY

A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc OF WESTERN LIFE.

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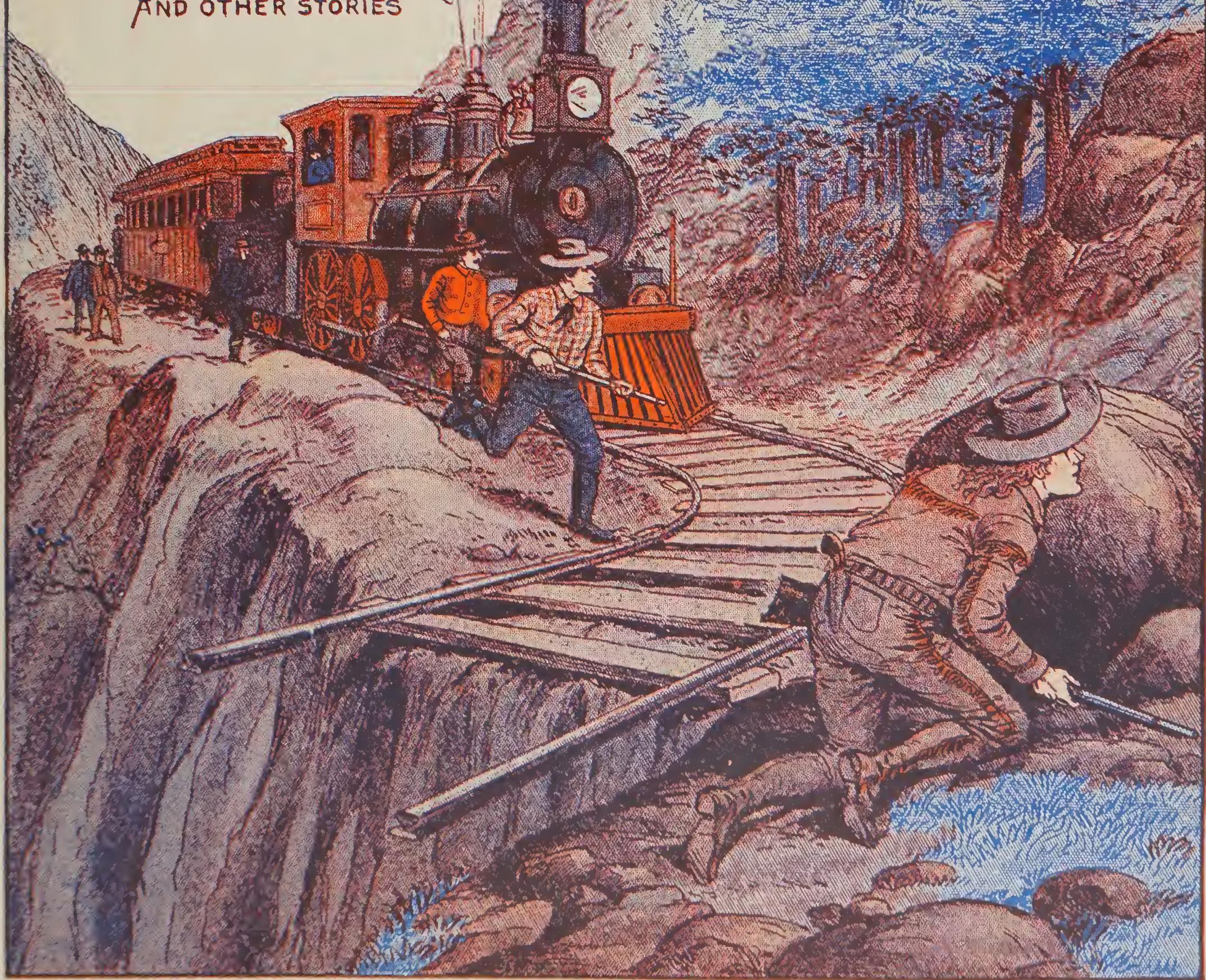
NEW YORK, JUNE 11, 1915.

Price 5 Cents.

YOUNG WILD WEST'S GREAT SCHEME; OR, THE BUILDING OF A RAILROAD

By AN OLD SCOUT.

AND OTHER STORIES



Just as Wild reached the spot where the rails had been taken up and changed, a rifle shot rang out and a bullet whizzed past his head. He quickly jumped forward behind a boulder at the side of the track.



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A Magazine Containing Stories, Sketches, Etc., of Western Life

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YOUNG WILD WEST'S GREAT SCHEME

— OR —

THE BUILDING OF A RAILROAD

By AN OLD SCOUT

CHAPTER I.

FOUR PLOTTERS.

In a dingy back room of one of the lowest gambling and drinking saloons of the town of Spondulicks, in the Black Hills, four men were seated one afternoon in May a few years ago.

Two of the men were attired in ordinary clothing, such as is worn by the average citizen of a civilized community, and the other two, who had been traveling out in the rain, wore costumes typical of the scouts and cowboys of the West.

"Well, what have you learned?" asked the stouter of the two men, whose appearance indicated that they had remained under shelter during the rain.

"We learned that ther railroad is goin' to be built."

The fellow who said this was a swarthy, dark-skinned man of forty, who had anything but a prepossessing appearance.

"Saffron Joe" was the name he went by; in fact, it was the only one he ever knew, having been called it since his earliest remembrance.

His companion was a white man, with shifty gray eyes and a shrewd look on his face, and when Saffron Joe said that they had learned that the railroad was going to be built, he nodded and slapped his hand on the table to emphasize what his companion said.

This was Crafty Keel, who had the reputation of being one of the greatest sneaks ever known in Upper Iowa.

Both he and Saffron Joe were strangers in Spondulicks, having been there but a couple of days.

They had been hired to come here for a rather strange purpose.

The stout man referred to before was the head of the stage coach line that ran through Weston, and so on to Devil Creek, some eighteen or twenty miles distant from the former mentioned town.

In the past few days it had become noised about through Spondulicks that Young Wild West, the celebrated boy scout, was talking of building a railroad from there to Weston on his own hook.

Rumor had it that the railroad company was going to help him along with the scheme, although they were not going to put one cent into it.

As soon as this rumor reached the ears of George Jacobs, the president and half owner of the stage coach company, he at once sent for Saffron Joe and Crafty Keel to come to him.

He was determined that the scheme of Young Wild West should never materialize.

If the railroad was built and put in operation his business would be ruined.

His contract with the Government to carry the mails would

surely be annulled, and there would be no more passengers or freight for him to take over to Weston.

The only thing for him to do in that case would be to move over to Weston and run the route to Devil Creek.

But there would be little money in that, for the money he and his associates had invested in the company, as Devil Creek was but a very small place.

"So Young Wild West has decided to build the railroad, then?" remarked the tall man seated next to the head of the stage coach line.

This was Andy Anderson, the proprietor of the gambling saloon.

"Yes, sir," answered Saffron Joe. "That is what we have learned to-day."

"How did you come to learn it for a fact?" questioned Jacobs, biting the ends of his mustache in a vexatious way.

"Well, you know you told us to go over to Weston, an' we did. That is all the talk over there, an' we both heard Young Wild West say with his own mouth that the railroad was going right through, an' that work would begin on it Monday morning."

"Who is going to furnish the money for the project?"

"The Wild West Mining and Improvement Company, of which this Young Wild West is the head one."

"So that's how the land lays, is it?" remarked Andy Anderson. "I have heard that ther Wild West Minin' and Improvement Company is a pretty rich concern. Young Wild West struck it pretty rich when he started it goin'."

"He certainly did," George Jacobs admitted.

"An' he's got ther reputation of always doin' anything he lays out to do?"

"That's right."

"An' though he is only what you might call a boy, he's a bad one to tackle?"

Jacobs shrugged his shoulders.

"Every one who knows him is aware of that. He is certainly the quickest shot I have ever seen, an' that's why I have hired Saffron Joe an' Crafty Keel. What one can't do to the face of Young Wild West, the other can do to his back."

"Get 'im to come in here, an' I'll fix him by stickin' a knife in his back before he knows what struck him!" exclaimed Crafty Keel, pressing his thin lips together and rolling his shifty eyes.

"That's just what I wouldn't like to happen—not for anything," spoke up the proprietor of the place. "Why, if that was to happen this place would be cleaned out in no time, an' ther chances are that some one would dance on nothin' at ther end of a rope or else be turned into a pepper-box cover."

"No; that wouldn't do," and Jacobs shook his head.

"Well, let me tell you how it kin be done," and Saffron

Joe reached for the bottle. "I'll meet him, an' then pick a quarrel with him an' shoot him."

The villain was reckless and daring, anyway, and the whisky having gone to his head, he was now doubly so.

The other three men looked at him in surprise.

Crafty Keel nodded admiringly, and the other two men showed signs of being incredulous.

It probably occurred to them that the fellow was offering to throw his life away.

He did not know Young Wild West as well as they did.

"Joe," said Jacobs, after a slight pause, "if you was perfectly sober you wouldn't talk like that."

"I wouldn't, hey?" was the quick retort. "You've known me for eight or ten years, haven't you?"

"Yes; all of that."

"Did you ever find that I am afraid of any one in that time?"

"No! I've known you to drop some of the best of them, too. But Young Wild West is the toughest proposition you ever bucked ag'in, I kin tell you that. He is a dead shot, quicker than lightnin', and has got more luck than any ten men put together. I am of ther honest opinion that if you tackle him face to face he will drop you."

"Well, I'll jest show you how much you are mistaken. I'll tackle ther young feller to his face, but I won't run any chances when I do it."

"How are you going to fix it that way?"

"I'll shoot him from my coat pocket ther instant he puts his hand on his shooter."

Jacobs nodded as though he thought there might be a chance, after all.

"I know you are an expert at shootin' from your pocket, Joe," said he. "Maybe you can do it, all right."

"Kin I? Well, you jest leave it to me."

"Well, ther quicker you get Young Wild West out of ther way ther better it will be," observed Anderson. "If it can be done before Monday the chances are that the railroad will never be started."

"That's right," nodded Jacobs. "It has got to be done between now an' Monday."

"An' if it shouldn't be, as soon after that as possible."

"Young Wild West an' some of his friends is comin' over here to-morrer mornin'," observed Crafty Keel. "I heerd 'em say so over at Weston yesterday. I wasn't hangin' around there for nothin'. I kin tell yer! I knows what my eyes an' ears was made for."

"Yes; Keel would make a fust-class Government detective, only he ain't honest enough," laughed Saffron Joe. "If you fellers will jest step out back of ther shanty I'll show you how I kin shoot from my pocket."

The room opened into the yard, and as the rain had ceased to fall temporarily, the four villains stepped outside.

An old battered hat lay on the ground, and picking this up, Joe placed it on top of a post.

Then he placed both hands in the pockets of his coat, and stepped back a few paces.

"You are what I call a young sucker!" he said, addressing the hat. "I have chewed such people up as you are afore breakfast many a time. Look out for me, for I'm goin' to take a bite of you right now."

As the words left his lips the muffled report of a revolver rang out.

"Jest examine ther hat," said the swarthy villain, with a satisfied grin on his face.

The keeper of the saloon stepped over and took it from the post.

The bullet had passed through the center of it!

"That is ther best I ever seen!" he cried. "But your coat pocket is afire, ain't it?"

"Yes. That's ther only objections I've got ag'in shootin' that way. It ain't good for ther coat you've got on."

He smothered the sparks as he spoke, and then taking off the garment shook it till all the smoke had left it.

"Mebbe some of yer think I can't do it ag'in," he added, looking around.

"No; none of us think that way, I guess," Anderson hastened to reply. "Let us go in and have a drink."

"I reckon I won't be needed, after seein' that wonderful shootin'," observed Crafty Keel, shrugging his shoulders.

"Don't get to thinkin' that way," said Jacobs, speaking quickly. "I hired you fellers to work for me by ther month, didn't I?"

"Yes."

"With ther understandin' that as soon as this Young Wild

West had kicked ther bucket you was to get five hundred apiece and ther bounce at the same time?"

After having another drink from the bottle on the table all hands went out into the barroom of the place.

It was a big room, and in addition to the bar there were several card tables in it.

These were all occupied, it being a rainy day, and the men from the mines were not working.

While the four stood in the center of the room talking two strangers entered.

They were young fellows of twenty-one, or so, and wore the overalls and jumpers usually used by railroaders.

Evidently the two had not been in such a place before, and had dropped in to see what a gambling house looked like.

This proved to be the case, for a moment later one of them asked the bartender if the place had ever been pulled for running gambling games so openly.

Saffron Joe heard the remark, and he at once sided up to the young men.

"Tenderfeet, ain't you?" he asked.

"Well, I suppose we are," replied one. "We are from Chicago, and are strangers in this part of the country."

"You both come out here ready to work, I see," he resumed, looking at their rigs.

"Well, yes. You see, some one stole our clothes on the train last night, and almost everything else we had but our money and our overalls. We had our money in a safe spot, you see."

"That's good!" and the villain's swarthy face lighted up.

"Lucky to have the overalls and jumpers, ain't we?" spoke up the other young man. "We are goin' to buy some clothes to-morrow after we meet our boss."

"Who is your boss—mebbe I know him?"

"Young Wild West. We come out here to run the locomotive that is to pull the construction train on his new railroad as fast as it is built."

CHAPTER II.—

WILD GOES TO SPONDULICKS ON BUSINESS.

"There is no use talkin'! This is ther greatest scheme I ever heerd tell of!"

It was Proprietor Brown, of the Gazoo Hotel, who said this.

He was standing in front of the post-office in Weston, and his remark was addressed to Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie, the scout, Wild's chum.

"Well, I must admit that it is a great scheme," our hero replied. "I have been thinking about it a long time, but now it has come to pass. The contract is given out already, and it is not going to cost so much, after all."

"But it will empty the treasury of your company, just the same," Brown said, shaking his head.

"I know that. But how long will it be before the Grand Island Railroad Company will be offering us double the cost of the road, for the purpose of adding it to their branch which runs into Spondulicks? It don't look like a paying venture to them now, but just wait! Weston is going to be one of the biggest towns in these mountains, and it is not going to be such a long time, either."

"That's right!" chimed in Cheyenne Charlie, who was always ready to stand by anything his young friend said.

"Well, I hope it does happen that way. If it does you fellers will be ther richest men in ther Hills in a couple of years from now," and Brown nodded, to show that he meant just what he said.

"It strikes me," went on Young Wild West, "that we will have very little grading to do. About twenty miles of track will have to be laid, though, and that will bring the depot at this end on the level table-land, just a hundred and ten feet above our property. We will use elevators to load and unload the freight."

"By jove! Ther range is putty near level after yer git up that high, ain't it? I never thought of it before."

"Well, I have, as I said before. We are going over to Spondulicks this morning to meet the surveyors I have hired, and some other men. This road is going to be laid out according to my ideas, though, of course, I expect the surveyors to get the proper grade. I have traveled over the route I have selected three times in the last week, and I will bet a dollar to a cent that it is all right."

"I know it is all right," Cheyenne Charlie assured the hotel keeper.

"So you are going over to Spondulicks this mornin'?" inquired Brown.

"Yes: we are going to start out pretty soon, as we want to arrive there about noon."

"Let me go along with you, will you?"

"Certainly. We will be pleased to have you."

"All right. I'll order my horse to be got ready. I haven't been over to Spondulicks in some time. I have found John Selwick, my bartender, to be a very trustworthy man, an' I kin leave any time an' feel satisfied that ther business is goin' on jest as good as it would if I was there."

Brown walked over to his place of business to get his horse, and Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie went over to the office of the Wild West Mining and Improvement Company.

They found assembled there Wild's other chums: Jim Dart, Jack Robedee, Lively Rick, Dove-Eye Dave, Rex Moore, the bookkeeper, and old Sam Murdock, the post-master, who had just recovered from a wound in the shoulder, which was given him by a thief in attempting to rob the post-office.

All hands were very much interested about the proposed new railroad, and were anxious to see work begun on it.

In a few minutes Brown came riding up, so Wild and Charlie went out to where they had left their horses tied while they walked over to the post-office.

Our hero's beautiful sorrel stallion, Spitfire, certainly made a picture as he stood there with arched neck and flowing mane and tail.

The others would have liked to go over to Spondulicks with them, but they left the matter to Wild, and did not ask him, since he had said that three would be quite enough to go.

It was a little before ten when they set out, so that would give them ample time to reach Spondulicks by noon.

The road was now getting to be a pretty well-traveled one, so they met several horsemen and the stage coming over on their way.

As was his usual custom, Young Wild West was on the alert for danger all the time.

But none of those they met proved to be anything but civil men, who minded their own business, and they rode into the town a few minutes before twelve without mishap.

Our friends put up at the hotel they always stopped at when they went over there, and when they drove in the yard to put up their horses, the landlord, whose name was Ryan, came out and gave them a warm welcome and a hearty hand-shake.

"You are good for sore eyes, Wild," he said. "I hear you are going to build a railroad, and though a good many of the business men here in Spondulicks think it will be a detriment to our town, as people who would otherwise stop here will go on to the end of the line before getting off, I am real glad of it, detriment or no detriment."

"I am glad to hear you talk that way," our hero answered. "Some people are never willing to give a man credit for what he tries to do to benefit mankind and make the world better in general; and I'll wager that these same people who are against having the railroad extended to Weston are of the sort who don't believe in giving anybody a show, but want everything they can lay their hands upon, and more besides."

"I guess you are right," laughed Ryan. "I hear that Andy Anderson, the keeper of the gambling crib down the street, is the leader of the opposition to your move."

"Oh; he is, eh? Well, he had better be careful how he opposes me. I know he bears me no love. If he was running a place over in Weston he would run it on a far different scale from what he does here. We never allow more than one person to be robbed and murdered in a place over our way. After that happens we generally see to it that the proprietor of the place where the crime was committed is taken care of. He generally does a rope dance with nothing but thin air to dance on."

After dinner Wild and Charlie went out on the street for the purpose of walking down to the depot to see if the men they expected had arrived yet.

They crossed over the street and took to the sidewalk.

"There is Anderson's place now," observed our hero, pointing out the gambling resort, which they would be compelled to pass on their way to the depot.

"Yes, I know," was the reply. "We must keep our eyes open when we pass the place. You know what happened the other day."

"I didn't hot the man who tipped my ear with a bullet. That was a great day all around."

They had reached the place, when out came two men staggering though they were very drunk.

They were no others than Saffron Joe and Crafty Keel. The former took good pains to fall against Wild and nearly knock him off his feet.

The boy did not make a move to resent this, but simply pushed the man he supposed to be drunk aside and walked on.

But he had not taken over half a dozen steps when Saffron Joe ran up and caught him by the collar.

"What are yer shovin' me fur?" he demanded, roughly.

As our hero turned around he saw the fellow place his hands in his coat pockets.

This was not the sort of a move a man who was trying to pick a fist fight would be apt to make, and it struck Wild instantly what he was up to.

Without the least hesitation Young Wild West whipped out his revolver and sent a bullet direct for the right pocket of Saffron Joe.

The wretch uttered a howl of pain and pulled out his hand too quick to talk about.

The bullet had left him minus a finger!

"Up with your hands!" cried Young Wild West.

Joe obeyed much quicker than he world have done if he had not been hit.

CHAPTER III.

THE BUILDING OF THE RAILROAD BEGINS.

"You scoundrel, you! You were not quick enough!" said Young Wild West. "I saw you over in Weston yesterday, and I put you down as being no good. Just to prove it to these men standing around that you were going to shoot me from your pocket, I will take your revolver out."

Cheyenne Charlie stood with his back to a lamp-post, his arms crossed in front of him and his hands resting on the revolvers that were in either side of his belt.

His eyes were all over at once, it seemed, and Wild was not looking at anything but the pocket he was making for.

Probably a dozen men had rushed from the saloon at the sound of the shot, and they stood there looking in surprise.

Among them were George Jacobs and Andy Anderson.

Both felt like letting a bullet go into the back of Young Wild West, but the look on the face of Cheyenne Charlie and the position his hands were in made them afraid to risk it.

It was Crafty Keel who had intended to stab Wild in the back, in case his companion got the worst of it, but the heart had been taken completely out of him when he saw how easy Saffron Joe got his finger shot off.

"Here is the shooter he meant to drop me with!" exclaimed our hero, as he took the weapon from the villain's pocket. "I don't believe he intended to do it because he had a grudge against me," he added, flashing a glance at every face in the crowd in one brief instant. "It is my opinion that the yellow-faced renegade was hired to do it."

A deathly silence followed this declaration, and then the boy resumed:

"If there is any one in the hearing of my voice who wants my life I dare him to come out and face me! If there is half a dozen of you who want it, I dare you all to face me at one time! Ah! There is no one, eh? Very well. Good-day, gentlemen. As for you two fellows, I want you to stand right there on the sidewalk till my friend and I are twenty paces distant. Then we will turn and let you have a couple of bullets, just to let you know that we are awake."

At this Crafty Keel made a desperate leap and went between the legs of the men in the crowd into the saloon.

Wild and Charlie laughed heartily at this move, and then backed away from the spot, Brown following them.

Saffron Joe remained on the sidewalk, his hands still above his head and the blood dripping in a stream from his wounded finger.

It was more than evident that he had been very much impressed by his first encounter with Young Wild West.

But before our friends had covered the twenty paces he darted into the gambling saloon, as did the rest who had come out to see the fun.

"Jove!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie, with a sigh of relief. "What made you think that he was going to shoot from his pocket?"

"He put his hand there as he was talking, and as I had already set him down as an unprincipled scoundrel, I thought it was my duty to fire."

The three walked over to the depot, which was but a rather

small, rough affair, since the road had not been long in operation to that point.

All the buildings and sheds were rather crude and botchy in appearance, but that made little difference to the go-ahead people in that section.

A railroad was a railroad, and that was a great thing for the citizens of Spondulicks.

As Wild stepped upon the platform of the depot almost the first man he met was Coville, the superintendent.

It was the first time they had met since the day the cowboy carnival was held, and the railroad man expressed great pleasure at meeting the young prince of the saddle.

"You are looking fine, Wild," he said. "Believe me when I say that I am real glad to see you."

"The feeling is mutual," answered the boy. "Your appearance would indicate that the world is using you good."

"And so it is. Charlie, how do you do?" and he shook hands with the scout.

"Pretty well, thank you," was the reply.

"Mr. Coville, this is our friend Brown, the proprietor of the leading hotel in Weston," said Wild, introducing their companion.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Brown. I suppose you came over with Young Wild West in the interest of the new railroad?"

"Yes; that's jest what I came over with Wild an' Charlie for. I'm so interested in ther great scheme that, I couldn't wait till they got back to tell me about it."

"Well, Wild," and the superintendent turned to our hero, "I am real glad that you are going to build the railroad. The company would have done it, anyhow, inside of a year; and so you might as well get the benefit of it, for it is bound to pay. There is a fortune in it for you, as sure as anything."

"I am of that same opinion myself. But I am not looking for the fortune so much as I am to boom our town and make it second to none in the Territory."

"Well, you are bound to have the fortune if that is accomplished," and Coville smiled as though he thought Young Wild West was an exceptionally good financier.

"Do you know whether our men have arrived yet?" asked Wild, giving the subject a slight change.

"Yes: they came yesterday. They are stopping at the hotel across the street, where I recommended them. The whole outfit arrived here ahead of time. Your engine and flat-cars lie on the switch over there. There is quite a train of cars, and they are loaded with the steel rails and the other things you ordered."

"Good!" was the reply. "I guess we will go over to the hotel and see the foremen of the different gangs."

"All right. I will go over with you if you have no objections. I have become acquainted with some of the men, you know, since their short stay here."

The four now went over to the hotel, and found the men there waiting for the arrival of Young Wild West.

Coville quickly introduced him to them, making quite a flowery little speech in doing so.

"This is the boss young fellow of the hustling West," he said, in conclusion, "so you want to stick by him and do what is right."

"We will! We will!" was the reply, in a chorus.

Then the men were introduced singly.

The foreman of the construction gang was named John McGinnis. Billy O'Connor was the conductor, and Ed. Lewis and Pat Farrel were the engineer and fireman. The men who were to lay out the road were Mark James and Robert Lee.

Wild sized them all up quickly, and decided that they were all honest men.

The engineer and fireman were not much more than boys, and were the ones who had drifted into the gambling den the afternoon before, and answered the questions of Saffron Joe.

They appeared very anxious to get on terms of intimacy with Wild, and noticing it, he began to talk with them.

"It is a great honor to meet you, Young Wild West," said Ed. Lewis, the engineer. "We have heard a great deal about you. I must say that you are not far away from my idea of what you looked like."

"The same way with me," put in Farrel, the fireman, who was an American born of Irish parents. "We have lived in Chicago all our lives, and I, for one, was always anxious to get out this far and see the country and mingle with the people in it."

"Well, you will find things different here from what they are in Chicago," Wild answered. "Still, it isn't half as bad a place as you may have imagined it to be."

"Oh! we will get along all right," said the engineer. "We met with a little hard luck on the start, but that don't amount to much."

"What was that, may I ask?"

"Oh! we had our clothes stolen, and we are compelled to wear our working rigs till we find a good place to fit ourselves out again. We met a fellow in a gambling place yesterday afternoon, while we were walking around to see the sights, and he tried to tell us where to go to buy clothing, but we didn't go there. He said his name was Saffron Joe, and he was about the toughest specimen of a Westerner that we have seen so far."

"If you take my advice, you won't bother your time with Saffron Joe," Wild hastened to tell them. "It is only about half an hour ago that I was compelled to shoot one of his fingers off."

"What!" and the two young fellows looked at him in astonishment.

"I shot just in time to save my life, too. He was just going to put a bullet in me from a gun in his pocket."

The engineer and fireman then wanted to know all about it, so our hero told them, not forgetting to say that there were people in Spondulicks who were determined that he should not build the railroad.

"We will do our part toward it, anyway," the young engineer assured him.

Wild then had quite a long talk with the two men who had been recommended to him to survey the road.

"I want you to take a ride over the proposed route with me," he told them. "I will see that you are supplied with a horse apiece."

"I shall like that all right, as I am a great lover of a horse," James answered.

"Well, I can't say that I like to ride horseback as well as I do in a railway coach; still, I know how to keep in the saddle, and it will be a novelty," Lee added.

Wild went out and soon got the horses.

Then he advised all hands to make their headquarters for the present at Ryan's Hotel, as better accommodations could be had there for less money.

As the men had only stopped where they were temporarily, they paid what they owed, and then all hands went over to Ryan's.

It was decided that the surveyors were to go right on to Weston and stay there when they were not engaged in working.

Our hero figured that their work would be the most important of it all, and he wanted to be in close touch with them all the time.

So their instruments were ordered to be sent over with the next stage-coach, and then the party of five started for Weston over the proposed railroad route.

James and Lee were well up in their business, and they took in their surroundings with a critical eye as they rode along.

They took their time in going over, so it was near dark when they got into Weston.

Both had taken notes on the way, and after supper, when the officers and members of the Wild West Mining and Improvement Company were gathered in the office, they reported that it was going to be a very easy matter to run the road from Spondulicks over to the table-land above the property owned by the company.

"It will take two weeks to make the survey and stake it out, though," they said, "and after that is done the rails can be laid and the work pushed along."

"Well," observed Young Wild West, "if there is no more grading to be done than I think there is, if I can get the materials and men, I will have the railroad running inside of two months."

"That hardly seems possible, Wild," remarked Jim Dart.

"Nothing impossible about it," spoke up Lee. "If there is little or no grading to be done, how long will it take to lay the rails? Not long, I assure you."

"Well, you people know your business, so I won't have any more to say. I hope, though, that it will turn out just as Wild thinks it will."

"It will turn out that way," Cheyenne Charlie assured them, with an emphatic nod of his head.

"Charlie has great faith in me, anyway," laughed our hero. "If it don't turn out the way I expect it to, it won't be his fault."

Their implements arrived the next morning, so James and Lee went right to work.

There was good weather for the next ten days, and nothing

happened to bother them, so at the end of that time the surveying was all done and the road staked out.

And then there was cause for much rejoicing among the friends of Young Wild West.

It had turned out just as the young prince of the saddle said it would.

A gang of fifty men could do all the grading that was necessary in a week.

That seemed almost incredible, but it was true, nevertheless.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST RIDE ON THE NEW ROAD.

The following Monday the work of grading and laying the rails began.

Young Wild West had been successful in getting both men and materials, and it now looked as though everything would be plain sailing.

He had seen nothing of Saffron Joe or Crafty Keel since the day he had met them in Spondulicks, but he was on the lookout for them all the time.

When the track was laid to a distance of a mile and a half outside of Spondulicks it came to a ravine that had to be crossed with a bridge.

There was plenty of gravel to be had from the mountain-side, so there was no difficulty about having a good bed for the ties to rest in.

The chasm to be bridged was only about thirty feet in width, but it required some good engineering to build a wooden bridge that would stand the strain.

But while the regular construction gang had been laying the mile and a half track, another gang had been building the bridge under the personal supervision of James and Lee.

Of course, Wild was the real overseer of the job, but he found that James and Lee were men to be trusted, so he had little to say concerning it.

The bridge was built, and then they had plain sailing to lay the track for the next ten miles.

Then another chasm would have to be bridged.

It was only a single track, of course, but there was to be a switch a fourth of a mile long in the center, where trains could meet and pass.

The work progressed rapidly, and finally half the track was laid.

Two locomotives, eight passenger cars and four freight cars had been purchased by the company, and one of the locomotives and two of the cars reached Spondulicks on the day that the track was completed to the switch.

Young Wild West decided to give the folks at Weston their first ride that day, so he got them ready, and all hands rode over to Spondulicks on horseback.

They put up their horses at Ryan's Hotel, and then boarded one of the passenger coaches, which was to be the first of the kind to run over the newly-laid rails.

The party consisted of Wild and Arietta, his sweetheart; Jim and Eloise, Charlie, Jack and Rick and their wives, Walter Jenkins and Rex Moore and their wives, and Dove-Eye Dave and old Sam Murdock.

A dozen of the best citizens of Weston, and several from Spondulicks were also in the party, which was just large enough to comfortably fill the car.

Wild took a notion to ride in the locomotive.

As the only engineer and fireman they had were Ed Lewis and Pat Farrel, they, of course, were in charge of the engine.

And Billy O'Connor, attired in a brand new uniform, went along as conductor.

It was just eleven o'clock when the locomotive gave a toot, and the conductor yelled out, All aboard!"

The starting point was only a hundred feet from the old depot in Spondulicks, and when the engine and car pulled out there was considerable cheering.

Wild was in his glory as he felt the train start.

One of his fondest hopes was soon to be realized, for here they had a railroad that was already half-way to Weston!

And in a few weeks more it would be all the way.

Puff, puff, puff!

Ding-a-ling! Ding-a-ling!

Toot! Toot! Toot-toot!

As the engine and car got outside of the town about a mile the whistles rang with the sounds of real progress and industry.

Where there is a railroad there is generally lots of the things that go to make up civilization.

It was the first time Wild had ever been on a locomotive, and he was very much interested.

Engineer Lewis was not a great deal older than he was, and he was greatly pleased by the presence of the young prince of the saddle.

He showed him all about the workings of the iron horse, and Fireman Farrel insisted that he should ring the bell.

"This is really a novelty to me," Wild shouted so the two could hear him. "It is the first time I was ever on a locomotive, and I must say that I feel a great deal safer when I am on a horse's back. I think, though, that it would not take me long to learn how to run this thing."

"You are right enough on that," was the reply. "It does not take a bright person long to learn how to run a locomotive. The thing is, though, to learn all about the mechanism of the machine. It is easy enough to open the throttle and pull back the lever when you want to start, and close them when you want to stop; but suppose something gets out of order? What then?"

"I understand," said Wild with a laugh. "Of course it would take a machinist to attend to things in that case."

Then, seeing that the fireman was about to throw some wood in the furnace (there was a scarcity of coal in that region in those days), he jumped in to assist him.

"I might as well learn to be a fireman," he observed.

The locomotive was not proceeding at a very high rate of speed, but was going fast enough to please those in the car.

It was nine miles to the switch, and after the bridge had been passed in safety the engineer let the machine out a little.

A cheer came from the forward end of the car when the speed began to increase and, turning around, Wild saw his sweetheart and two or three of the others standing there.

They were enjoying the ride immensely, and were waving their handkerchiefs, just as if there were people along the track to see them.

The road was pretty well ballasted, and the car went along surprisingly easy. As they neared the switch the engineer slowed down at Wild's request.

"We want to be careful," he said. "This is the last of the road that was laid, and it may not be in as good condition as it might be."

He had scarcely spoken the words when Ed Lewis uttered a cry of fear and shut off steam.

A few yards ahead of them the rails had been shifted so as to run straight to the edge of the precipice!

"Reverse the engine! Put on the brake!" cried Young Wild West. "You can stop her before we get there!"

The engineer obeyed promptly.

They were going slowly at the time, and that was all in their favor.

As Young Wild West did not make a move to jump from the locomotive, the engineer and fireman remained at their posts.

But by the looks of them they were on the verge of leaving it.

When the engine and car finally came to a stop with a jerk and a jar the cowcatcher was within ten feet of the edge of the precipice!

That was close enough!

"Back her up!" exclaimed Wild, as calmly as if he had simply been trying an experiment and had satisfied himself.

Puff, puff, puff!

Back they went to a place of safety.

Then Young Wild West jumped off the engine and started forward to make an investigation.

He knew that some of his enemies had been at work, and he wanted to see if he could strike a clew as to who they were.

Jim Dart and Cheyenne Charlie got off the car at about the same time.

Just as Wild reached the spot where the rails had been taken up and changed, a rifle-shot rang out and a bullet whizzed past his head.

He quickly jumped forward behind a boulder at the side of the track.

"They have opened the game again," he said to Jim and Charlie, as they came up to him. "That was a very neat trick they played, and if it had succeeded we would have all gone to our death in a hurry. The men who planned this must be veritable fiends, and if I can only set eyes upon them, and know for a certainty that they did it, I will send them to eternity as fast as I can sight my rifle and pull the trigger!"

This was said in a tone that showed how earnest Wild was.

The mere thought of the locomotive and car going over the precipice was appalling!

The lives of half a hundred people would have been snuffed out in the twinkling of an eye.

Not one of them could possibly have escaped death, since there was a sheer fall of over three hundred feet to the jagged rocks below.

On the locomotive Wild had carried his weapons, the same as he always did when riding his horse.

He had his rifle in his hand as he stood behind the boulder with Charlie and Jim.

They also had theirs.

"I am going to hunt up the fellow who fired that shot at me," said the boy.

"We will help you to find him," retorted the scout.

"And shoot him on sight," added Jim.

"Did either of you locate the spot the shot was fired from?"

"Straight ahead of us up on the mountain-side," answered Jim. "I saw the smoke go curling upward."

"Well, the three of us will make for that point, then, each taking a different route. I will go straight up, as near as I can; you go to the right, Jim, and you, Charlie, to the left. We will try and get around them. I say them, because I believe there is more than one man up there. Most likely two, anyway, and if there are I know pretty well who they are."

"Saffron Joe an' Crafty Keel," nodded Charlie.

"Exactly."

Then our hero turned to the engineer, and said:

"Stay right here till we come back, and be on the lookout for danger. If you should see a crowd of men coming down the hill, just get ready to give them fits, and then back away, whether we are here or not. There are ladies in the car who must be taken care of. Keep a good watch, now!"

Ed Lewis assured him that he would, and Jack Robedee and Dove-Eye Dave called out from one of the car windows that they would look after things.

It now being thoroughly understood what they were to do, our three friends started to ascend the hill.

As the rather steep slope was covered with bushes and stunted oaks and pines, they could work their way upward without being seen by any one from above.

Young Wild West had started on missions similar to this before.

And he had generally succeeded in getting his man without much trouble.

He was confident that he would succeed this time, unless the fellow who had fired the shot had fled.

But this was not likely, as he would not be apt to think that he would be sought for up there.

A person holding a high position like that would naturally feel that he had all the advantage in the world over those below him, and he would simply lay there and shoot every time he got a chance.

It would not likely happen that any one would dare venture up there, when they did not know exactly how many they had to contend with, or where they were located.

Wild had an idea that his enemies would reason in this way, and he was about right.

Our hero kept on working his way upward, and soon both Charlie and Jim were lost sight of.

And they were so cautious in their movements that he could not hear a sound from them.

Wild had slung his rifle over his shoulder now, and simply carried a revolver in his right hand, which was ready for instant use.

He knew he was liable to come upon his man at any time, if he was there.

It struck him that it had been Crafty Keel who had fired the shot, and he wanted to catch a glimpse of the treacherous villain.

That would be enough.

He would not look for any further proof, but would shoot at once.

"It was those two who helped to shift the track," he thought. "They could not have done it in such a short time, of course, as the gang of men are not far ahead at work. It was a very neat trick, and must have been worked in a very short time."

He turned and looked down as he came to this conclusion, and saw that the workmen had just discovered what had happened now.

They had heard the engine and car coming, and as it had stopped so suddenly, they had concluded to come over and see what the trouble was.

The only way Wild could think of such a thing being done was that some of the workmen must have been bribed.

He meant to investigate the matter when he got back to the car.

CHAPTER V.

THE BLOODY SIX.

We will now follow Jim Dart when he switched off to the right to ascend the side of the mountain to search for the man who had fired the shot at Wild.

The boy was thoroughly used to that kind of work, and he made his way rapidly along, moving in a very cautious manner.

He went off to a distance of probably a hundred yards to the right, and then headed straight up the hill.

Of course he was forced to crawl a big portion of the way, as he would be apt to be seen if he did not.

But crawling was nothing to Jim Dart.

He just gloried in what he was doing now, and was earnestly hoping that it might be he who should come across the villain, or villains, as the case might be, first.

When a person fired a shot at Young Wild West he might as well have fired at all his friends.

Jim was as incensed over the cowardly action as though the shot had been fired at him.

And so it was with Cheyenne Charlie, and all the rest of the friends of the young prince of the saddle.

Jim continued on his way, dodging from bush to bush, and all the while going upward.

Every now and then he would pause and listen.

But nothing could be heard save the sounds that came from the railroad track.

At length the boy came to the conclusion that he must be as high up as the shot came from.

He had reached a level spot that was covered by a growth of trees, and it struck him that this was the cover the shot had been fired from.

But he was a little to the right, he knew, so he concluded to make for the point he had set in his mind.

Just as he made a move to go ahead through the shrubbery something happened that Jim had not reckoned on.

A heavy body leaped upon him from behind, and he was forced to the ground.

At the same instant a rough hand was placed over his mouth, and the cry of warning he meant to sound for the benefit of his companions was hushed.

The boy made a desperate struggle, for he quickly found that he was in the grasp of two men.

They were no others than Saffron Joe and Crafty Keel, too!

When Young Wild West had guessed that they were the ones, he had hit the nail squarely on the head.

"Ha!" hissed the swarthy villain in Jim's ear, "you thought you was doin' a smart thing by comin' up here, but we've been watchin' yer for ther past five minutes. You come up here to kill us, so you have got ter die fur comin'."

Jim made a violent effort to free himself, as he realized that his situation was a desperate one.

But the two villains had caught him firmly, and they held him hard and fast.

Picking him up bodily they hurried away through the bushes with noiseless tread.

They did not pause till they had covered perhaps two hundred yards, and then panting from their exertions they lowered their captive to the ground and proceeded to bind and gag him.

This was accomplished in a remarkably short space of time, and then with an ugly grin on his sallow visage, Saffron Joe said:

"It's too bad you ain't Young Wild West. But I reckon he'll be comin' up presently to look for you, an' then I guess we'll tend ter his case."

At these words a thrill of hope shot through Jim.

They did not know that Wild and Charlie had also started up the mountain to hunt for them.

He was the only one they had caught sight of, according to that.

But what puzzled the boy most was why neither Wild nor the scout had been near enough to hear the noise his capture had caused.

But when he came to think of it, he remembered that the whole thing had been done in a silent manner, as the two men had moved like cats in carrying out the capture.

The place where the villains had halted was a dense thicket, and as they arose to their feet after they were satisfied that the boy was tied secure, they looked at each other and grinned in a satisfied manner.

"I guess we've done somethin' to-day, if we didn't manage

to send ther whole caboodle of 'em over ther precipice," observed Crafty Keel.

"You're right," replied his companion. "I wonder where them fellers went what helped us with ther track? Accordin' to what they said, ther cave they had found was right around here somewhere."

"It are a little further back, I reckon. Them four men are all right, an' when they said they could make more money livin' on ther mountain an' helpin' themselves to ther pocket-books of travelers now an' then, they knew jest what they was talkin' about."

"Of course they did. Well, what do you say—are we goin' to jine them or not?"

"Jine 'em, I say. We will have a better show of finishin' Young Wild West if we do; an' we kin git our money jest ther same. We can't live forever on ther money we git for our contract, you know."

Crafty Keel nodded approvingly.

"Well, let's hunt 'em up an' see what they have to say about what way we'll git rid of this feller."

All this was said in such a cool and matter-of-fact way that Jim Dart shuddered.

He felt that unless help came pretty soon they would surely murder him.

Of all the villains he had ever met, these were about as cool and heartless.

A human life was a small thing to them.

The fact of their having shifted the track so the locomotive and car would go crashing over the precipice was proof of what they were.

The two men again picked him up as though he was a sack of potatoes, and started to go further back through the thicket, which was now becoming so dense that they had trouble in forcing their way through it.

They were cautious in their movements, too, which showed that they were on the alert for danger.

For fully five minutes they kept on, panting from their exertions, and now and then exchanging words in a whisper.

Just as they let Jim to the ground again they heard the hum of low voices close at hand.

"That's 'em!" exclaimed Joe. "Wait here, an' I'll make sure of it."

His companion nodded and sat down on a stone to rest himself.

In less than two minutes the swarthy-faced villain came back, followed by a man dressed in the clothing of a laborer.

"It's all right, Keel," he said.

"Hello!" exclaimed the newcomer, as he looked at the helpless boy. "So you caught one of 'em, did yer? We didn't wait when we seen that the engine stopped in time to keep ther outfit from goin' over. We thought we had better light out afore we got caught, which was bound to happen if we'd stayed at our work."

"We stayed," said Keel. "That is, we got a good place up among the rocks, an' when ther feller they call Young Wild West jumped down from ther engine, I jest let a bullet fly at him. I don't know how it was that I missed him, but I did. I am a putty good shot, too."

"An' then we hung around till we seen this feller sneakin' up to find out who fired ther shot," added Joe, kicking Jim as he lay on the ground helpless.

"What are yer goin' to do with him?" asked the laborer.

"What are we goin' to do with him? Why, kill him!"

"D'y'e mean that?" gasped the man in surprise.

Crafty Keel looked at him pityingly.

"What do yer s'pose we took ther trouble to bring him way back here for?" he queried.

"I don't know; but if it had been me I'd have stuck a knife atween his ribs when I caught him."

"We wanted to bring him here for a purpose," spoke up Saffron Joe.

"What is ther purpose?"

"We have concluded to join in with you fellers and call ourselves ther 'Bloody Six'—that is, if you are all willin'."

"Whew! But that are a fine name, isn't it?" and the laborer closed his eyes.

"Yes; it just struck me now. Well, to be ther Bloody Six so fair, we ought to be able to have ther blood of an enemy. We'll take this feller to the cave you fellers have got, an' then we'll kill him. Then we will swear allegiance to each other. Ajit that a great idea?"

"The be! I ever heard!" cried the man, who was a simple and mortal of british instincts. "Come on! Ther rest

of ther gang is back here in ther bushes. We'll tell them about it, an' then we'll go to ther cave, where no one kin find us if they hunt for a week. Come on!"

The two hirelings of the president of the stage-coach line picked up Jim for the third time in the past few minutes, and followed the man.

They pushed through a narrow belt of bushes and came upon the other three laborers, who had so traitorously assisted them to move the rails to the precipice.

Their fellow-workers told them what was up in a very few words, and they all were delighted at the scheme Saffron Joe had suggested.

"Come right on to ther cave," said one, who appeared to be a sort of leader among them.

Descending into a little gully, they walked along a few yards and then came to a big cluster of overhanging vines.

One of them pulled some of the vines aside and an opening was disclosed sufficiently wide enough to admit two persons abreast.

Not the least bit of caution existed among the six villains now, it seemed, for they entered the hidden cave without so much as looking around to make sure that no one was watching them.

They were so much interested in the proposal Saffron Joe had made that they forgot everything else just then; and he, too, neglected to act with his usual custom.

The cave was not a very large one, but it was roomy enough to accommodate twice their number.

It was lighted by a narrow split in the rocky wall in the rear, which was really the face of a bluff.

A spring of water trickled from the rocks in one corner, so it was certainly a place well suited to such a gang.

Poor Jim was dropped to the ground in anything but a gentle manner.

He was suffering from the gag that was tied so tightly in his mouth, but his physical suffering was not to be compared with his mental just then.

He now thought that his time had arrived, for neither Wild nor Charlie had now showed up to save him.

Before reaching the cave he had been hopeful, but when the hanging vines fell back in place after the entrance of the six men, it struck him that when they shut out the light of day they also shut out his chances to live.

"Gents," said Saffron Joe, taking a big flask of whisky from his pocket, "let's take a drink."

When each one had taken a pull the flask was empty.

"Now, then," he continued, "let's git down to business. I make a motion that we form ourselves into a band of robbers an' call ourselves ther 'Bloody Six.'"

"Second ther motion!" cried the man who had first met them.

"All in favor of that say aye!" said Crafty Keel.

Every one of them said aye, so he declared the motion carried.

"Ther next thing in order is to prove ourselves ther Bloody Six," and Joe pulled his knife from his belt and tested its keenness on his thumb nail. "This boy we've got here is one of ther closest friends Young Wild West has got, an' consequently he are an enemy of ours. Everybody git his knife ready, now, an' when I say ther word, see who kin stick him ther deepest!"

This was satisfactory to them, for they each pulled out an ugly-looking knife.

"See here," said the fellow who had been the leader of the four. "It strikes me as though we ought to elect a leader afore we do this."

"Well, let's elect him, then," retorted Crafty Keel. "It won't take more'n a minute to do it."

"Well, what do you all say?"

"Go ahead!"

"Well, make your nominations, then."

"I nominate Spotted Bill!" exclaimed one of the four laborers.

This happened to be the fellow himself, and he smiled satisfactorily.

"I nominate Saffron Joe," spoke up Crafty Keel.

"All right. Any more nominations?"

There were none, so it was put to a vote.

It resulted in a tie, each receiving three votes.

"It'll take too long to settle it, so we had better stick ther boy first," said Spotted Bill. "Let her go, boys! Drop on your knees over him!"

Six keen-edged knives were raised to be plunged into the body of Jim Dart.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW JIM'S LIFE WAS SAVED.

Young Wild West continued his way up the mountain-side, pausing every few seconds to listen.

But he could hear nothing above him to indicate that there was any one there.

When he was nearly to the spot where the shot had been fired from, according to his reasoning, he suddenly found that he would be compelled to strike off to the left in order to get any further up.

A perpendicular wall of rock barred his way, as it was too high for him to think of climbing.

So he did the only thing he could do, which was to move to the left.

He was bound to find the scoundrel who had tried to shoot him, if he could.

He was now on a sort of ledge, and he could see the engine and car and the workmen near it below.

The men had taken refuge on the other side of the car to avoid giving any one a chance to pick them off from above.

A couple of minutes later Wild heard a slight sound just ahead of him.

Ready for business, he crept forward noiselessly.

The next instant he saw a figure crawling toward him.

It was Cheyenne Charlie.

The scout saw the young prince of the saddle at about the same time.

"Can't get up this way, eh?" said Charlie, when they were close enough to risk talking in a whisper.

"No; I was coming around here to see if there wasn't a way," was the reply.

"And I was coming this way to find one. Well, we may as well go further to the right, then."

This they did, going single file through the bushes.

In about five minutes they found a way to get up higher, and they immediately took advantage of it.

They were listening to hear from Jim, for they thought that he must have got all the way up before this.

But no sound came to their ears.

They now began to search cautiously among the bushes, their revolvers ready to use in case it became necessary.

Pretty soon they came to a sandy spot and saw footprints.

They were made by hob-nailed boots, such as the laborers working on the railroad wore.

Young Wild West nodded significantly.

He considered that they had gained something by coming up there.

They now began to follow the tracks, which were very plain in some places.

They could easily see that they had been made by more than one man, and Wild felt sure that they were running the would-be train wreckers to earth.

The practised eyes of our two friends showed them where the men they were trailing had forced through the thick bushes, and they were quite able to follow without the tracks.

For five or six minutes they kept on, and then they suddenly heard the sound of voices coming from they knew not where.

Wild and Charlie looked at each other and nodded.

The thought in the minds of both was that something was going to happen very soon.

They had reached a point on the mountain-side that was well back from the part that overlooked the railroad track.

It was a wild-looking spot, and the brier thickets and clumps of scrub oaks were thick and hard to get through.

Our two friends strained their ears to locate the sounds.

All of a sudden they heard a chorus of voices saying the word, "Aye!"

"There is a meeting of some sort in progress," Wild whispered. "And it is right under us, I should say."

"Yes, that's where that sound came from," replied Charlie, nodding in a satisfied manner.

"It must be that there is a cave under us."

"A sure thing."

"Let us find it, then."

The two started to crawl forward through the bushes and the decayed weeds and leaves of the last season.

They had made but a distance of probably ten feet when the ground gave way beneath them and they were precipitated downward like a shot!

They clutched at the edges of the newly made hole as they

went, but it crumbled away and they landed on a hard, smooth surface eight or nine feet below.

And then it was that they saw a sight that surprised them not a little.

On the ground lay Jim Dart, bound and gagged and as helpless as a new-born babe, while around him, with astonishment and alarm depicted on their faces, stood six men, each with a gleaming knife in his hand!

Young Wild West was on his feet as quick as a flash.

"Hands us, you fiends!" he cried. "The first man who moves from where he stands will die!"

The cave-in had happened so quickly that the villains were taken completely by surprise.

They had just dropped to their knees to obey the command of Spotted Bill, when without the least warning the roof of the cave fell through but a few feet from them.

Naturally they got upon their feet instantly, and as they did so they saw the intruders and heard the command of Young Wild West.

Like his companions, Cheyenne Charlie had clung to his revolver when he found himself falling, and he, too, was now on his feet and covering the men.

The men were but cowards at the best, and when they saw the muzzles of the revolvers that were leveled at them, they raised their hands above their heads.

"Now, then," resumed Wild, taking a step toward them, "I want every one of you but one to drop those knives—quick, now!"

One by one the villains let the knives drop.

The fellow who called himself Spotted Bill held onto his.

"That's it," and our hero nodded to him. "Now, you just free the captive you have. Be careful you do not cut him in doing it, either, for if you do you will drop dead in your tracks."

"I'll set him free all right, boss," was the reply in a meek tone. "We was only givin' him a scare, an' didn't mean to hurt him a bit."

Wild said nothing to this, but as soon as Jim's hands and feet were free he ordered the fellow to drop the knife and hold up his hands like the rest.

Instead of obeying this command Spotted Bill dropped to the ground and dove between the legs of the other villains, upsetting them right and left.

This action was entirely unexpected by either Wild or Charlie, but neither of them got excited over it.

"Up! Get up, every one of you, or we will begin to shoot!" cried Wild.

The men did get up, and in a hurry, too.

But when they were on their feet again they were close to the vine-covered entrance.

Our friends did not know that was the entrance—in fact, they had no idea where the place to get in and out was.

Jim Dart had now got up and torn the gag from his mouth.

"You were just in time, boys," he said fervently. "I was close to death that time—so close that I had given up all hopes. They were just going to plunge their knives in me when you tumbled through the roof of the cave. I—"

He was interrupted in what he was going to say, for at that instant there was a commotion among the six villains.

They had edged their way close to the hanging vines, and with a do-or-die effort they were disappearing from sight!

And Young Wild West, taken off his guard from listening to what Jim had to say, failed to draw bead on any of them as they disappeared.

But Cheyenne Charlie sent a shot after them at random, and a howl of pain told that one of them had been hit.

Wild handed Jim one of his revolvers, and then led the way to the spot where he had last seen the villains.

He was a little reckless now, and he plunged right through the vines, regardless of the fact that the six men might be waiting outside to shoot them as they came out.

But this didn't happen to be the case, so that was where our hero's good luck came to the fore again.

The men were too anxious to place as much distance as possible between them and Young Wild West, and the instant they got outside they made off through the thicket as fast as their legs could carry them.

They left a plain trail, however, and our three friends, bent on shooting or capturing them, followed it.

Through the tangled growth of bushes they rushed only to come out on a piece of ground that was as hard as flint where the trail was lost.

Wild came to a halt and his companions followed suit.

"There is no use in going any further just now," he said, scratching his ear thoughtfully. "They will find a place that

will just suit their purpose, and then they will lay in ambush for us. We may as well go back to the train, and put this heat off a little while."

There was wisdom in his words, and Jim and Charlie knew it.

The further the "Bloody Six," as they called themselves, got away, the bolder they would naturally become.

Then they would be apt to put up a fight.

They had something to be satisfied over, anyhow, as they had learned who the villains who had moved the rails were.

And Jim Dart had had a pretty close call in finding it out, too.

It seemed that a kind of Providence had intervened in his behalf when his two friends had tumbled through the roof of the cave.

If that remarkable occurrence had not come about just as it did he would have been slain by the villains.

As they hastened down the track he told Wild and Charlie his thrilling experience.

"I never saw such villainous demons in my life," he added. "I think those two fellows called Saffron Joe and Crafty Keel are really the worst I ever came in contact with. Why, they talked about putting me out of the way as though I was nothing more than a wounded animal they were going to put out of its misery."

"As brutal as they were, they are but cowards, after all, or they would never have given in to us the way they did. If they had been anything like men they would have put up a fight."

"That's right," chimed in Charlie. "I seen some of 'em trembling at ther knees."

Jim was still slightly pale from the ordeal he had gone through, and he simply shrugged his shoulders at these remarks.

No one knew better than he what the villains were.

"We will attend to them later on," observed Wild, as they came in sight of the waiting engine and car. "We will now finish the first ride over the new railroad just as though nothing had happened to mar the pleasure of it."

The workmen were still there, and all the male members of the party were out of the car, their rifles in their hands.

Jack Robedee led the crowd in a cheer when he caught sight of his three friends returning.

Evidently they had been alarmed at their absence, and thought something had happened to them.

Wild waved his hat to them as he led the way down the hill on a run.

"Did yer catch your man?" Dove-Eye Dave called out before they reached the track.

"Yes; I found him," was the reply. "There were others with him, and they gave us the slip. We will have them all in a day or two, never fear."

At this juncture John McGinnis, the foreman of the construction gang, stepped forward.

"Four of my men are missing," said he. "I have an idea that they had something to do with the moving of the rails."

"I am sure they did," replied our hero. "They are with two of the worst men to be found on the top of the earth. They did the dastardly job under the supervision of Saffron Joe and Crafty Keel, two men whom I have reason to believe were hired to kill me and keep the railroad from being built."

"Let the ladies come out!" called out Cheyenne Charlie. "There is no danger now. The six scoundrels are well up on the mountain, and will not show themselves now. They are thinkin' of hidin' more than anything else jest now."

Hearing this, Arietta and the rest of the female contingent from Weston came out of the car.

Then some of the other ladies followed.

Jim Dart then told just what had happened to him up to the time the roof gave way, and then our hero finished it.

It was certainly a remarkable story, and the eyes of all hands centered upon Jim, who had come so near being murdered in cold blood.

At a word from Young Wild West the workmen set to work placing the track in its proper place again, and then, after he had taken down the name of the four laborers who had quit working for an honest living, he called out for all to get along.

Then the train was started back for Spondulicks.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIGHTING AGAINST THE RAILROAD.

The engine and car backed into Spondulicks, and by the time our friends and their guests had got there they had al-

most forgotten the narrow escape they had had by the thoughtfulness of Young Wild West, when he advised the engineer to run a little slow as they were nearing the switch.

If it had not been for this thrilling incident it would have been a very enjoyable trip.

As it was every one was more than satisfied, and they did not hesitate to declare their willingness to make the trip over the entire road when it was completed.

When they left the train Wild and his party went over to Ryan's Hotel, where a sort of banquet awaited them.

The meal was gotten up in style, and being hungry from the excitement caused by the trip, all hands attacked the good things with a vim.

Speeches were made, stories were told and songs were sung.

Toward the latter end of the general good time some one called upon Jack Robedee to tell a story.

"I s'pose Jim Dart is ther one as suggested me to be called on," Jack said, as he arose from his chair. "But it don't make any difference whether it was or not; I'll tell a story, anyhow, an' a true one, too."

"When I was a boy I lived in New York State, as some of you have heard before. I wasn't exactly what might be called a good boy, neither was I bad. But there were some very bad boys in my neighborhood, an' I got to goin' with 'em, somehow; an' that might have made me a little worse than I would have otherwise been."

"Well, to git down to my story. It was when I was about twelve years of age that I made a monkey of myself, an' that is what I am goin' to tell you about. You often hear of a feller makin' a monkey of himself an'—"

"Go on with your story!" interrupted Jim Dart. "Don't go to beating around the bush so much."

"If you don't think I'm tellin' it right, you had better tell it for me," retorted Jack, just a little testily, for he noticed that Jim's remark was causing every one to smile.

But Wild quickly came to the rescue.

"I think Jack ought to be allowed to tell his story of how he made a monkey of himself in his own way," he said.

That settled it, so Robedee proceeded:

"As I said before, I was about twelve years old. A circus was advertised to exhibit at a large town not over eight miles from where we lived, an', of course, I made up my mind that I was a-goin' to go. There was two other boys who was bent on goin', too, an' as we had no money, we started in to earn enough to pay our expenses, for we intended to make a day of it.

"Somehow, my folks was always opposed to circuses, so I knewed there would be no use in askin' my father or mother for ther money to go.

"It took us ther whole time between that time and the day of ther circus to raise two dollars an' seventy-five cents between ther three of us, an' we had to work hard an' be mighty savin' to git it, too.

"It was a fine mornin' when ther circus day arrived, an' as soon as we got our breakfasts we met at ther crossroads an' set out to foot it for eight miles. But I didn't mind walkin' then any more than I do now, an' as we had plenty of time, we had a whole lot of fun on ther way.

"We reached ther town jest as ther men were puttin' up ther big tent, an' then we was interested for fair. It has been a good while since I've seen a circus, ladies and gentlemen, an' I feel as though I could enjoy it jest as much now as I did in them days.

"Well, to make a long story short, we hung around that tent plumb up to ther time that ther performance was ready to begin.

"Then we didn't hang around it any more; we went inside, after payin' our two shillin's apiece. They had animals in that circus, an' we jest enjoyed lookin' at them an' teasin' ther monkeys. I'll never forget that performance as long as I live, though I only seen about half of it.

"Jest as a handsome lady, dressed in pink an' spangles, was ridin' a cream-colored horse around ther ring an' jumppin' through hoops covered with paper, who should come in but my father an' ther fathers of ther two boys I was with! I seen ther old man ther first thing, but he didn't see me. Neither did my two companions notice who it was that come in jest then.

"I made an excuse about droppin' somethin' through ther seats, an' then down I let myself go to ther ground. I knewed I was goin' to catch it for runnin' away an' goin' to ther cirens, so I wanted to git somewhere that ther old man could not find me.

"I run along under them seats, while ther people were jest clappin' their hands an' hollerin' their 'preciation at ther act,

an' when I reached ther end of ther seats I made a dive out into ther part where ther animals were.

"My father catched sight of me as I run out, an' with a loud 'Jack, come here!' on his lips, he started after me like greased lightnin'.

"But I wasn't goin' to be catched, not if I could help it, so I looked around for a hidin'-place. I seen one, too, right before me. It was an empty cage, an' it was out of repair, an' had some canvas hangin' down over more'n half of it. Ther door was open, an' that was why I knowed it was empty at ther first sight of it.

"Well, I jest made a skip an' a jump an' got into that empty cage in no time. I heard my father an' ther other two boys' fathers an' a whole lot of ther circus people comin', so I pulled ther door shut an' layed down in a corner out of sight.

"I don't know how long I was in there, but it seemed like a couple of hours to me, when I heard the voice of my old man right near me. I took a peep an' seen him an' ther other two men walkin' around lookin' at ther animals. But that wasn't all, either! Ther two boys who had come to ther circus with me were with 'em, an' everybody seemed to be in a good humor.

"Ther whole amount of it was that the old man an' ther other two had got interested in ther animals, an' thinkin' I had gone on out of ther tent, they thought they'd git their money's worth an' see what was to be seen.

"I could hear ther two boys tellin' 'em that it was all my fault that they had come to ther circus, an' my father jest allowed that he'd attend to my case when he got home.

"I begun to feel mighty uncomfortable, for they was gittin' closer to my cage every minute. Pretty soon they did get there, an' they stopped right in front of it.

"What's in that cage?" my father asked.

"I don't know," an' then one of ther men put on his specs. One of my chums pulled ther canvas aside, so's he could read what was painted on ther cage.

"Largest Monkey Ever Exhibited!" read ther man, an' then they all got interested.

"There it is, back in ther corner," said my father. "Wait till I stir it up so's we kin see what it looks like."

"Then ther first thing I knowed I got a poke in ther ribs that made me yell with pain. I jumped up like anythin' an' kept right on hollerin'.

"Bless my heart if it ain't Jack!" my father cried, an' then he acted as though he was goin' to have a fit. I won't tell you what happened next, for you kin all guess. But that was ther only time that I ever made a monkey out of myself, though."

There was a good laugh all around as Jack concluded the story.

He had such an amusing way of telling things that he was bound to make a hit every time.

Shortly after the banquet was over the party from Weston mounted their horses and set out to get back to Weston before it got late.

Though darkness set in long before they got there, it was a very pleasant trip.

Nothng occurred to interfere with them, though Wild was on the lookout for the "Bloody Six."

He had an idea that they might be lying somewhere in ambush to get a shot at him.

But he proved to be wrong in his idea this time.

Brown, the proprietor of the Gazoo Hotel, was so much pleased over his ride over the new road, that he treated all his friends royally that night, and never got tired of telling them about it.

A man who lived in Spondulicks, and was interested in

the Overland Company that ran the stage-coach line, was there, and he showed great interest in what Brown said.

"It will be a great thing for Weston when the road is completed and gets to running," he said. "It will, of course, knock out our route from Spondulicks here completely; but we will move over here and make our headquarters to run to Devil Creek and the other small towns out from here. We won't really lose much in the end."

"That is ther way I like to hear a man talk!" exclaimed the proprietor of the place, putting out his hand to the man and giving him a hearty shake. "I've heard that all you folks are not of ther same opinion as you are, though."

"Oh! Some of them were very much opposed to the new railroad at first, but they have got reconciled to it now, and are as anxious to see it go through as I am."

The last words were the truth, if the others were not.

The men composing the company surely wanted to see the railroad go through as much as he did, which was not at all.

The fellow had been sent over there to learn all he could about what was going on, and it was George Jacobs, the president of the company, who had sent him.

It was also Jacobs who had hired the four laborers to help Saffron Joe and Crafty Keel to shift the track, so the car with its load of human beings would pitch over the precipice with Young Wild West.

And this man, whose name was Edwards, knew all about it.

"You had a good time, then, to-day, all but the narrow escape you had from death," he went on to say. "That must have been anything but a good time."

"You are right on that," Brown answered. "If it hadn't been for Young Wild West gettin' ther engineer to slow up as we neared ther switch, we'd have all gone to ther kind where ther weary are at rest. Young Wild West is— Ah, here he comes now. Hello, Wild!"

Sure enough, the young prince of the saddle was just coming in, along with Cheyenne Charlie and Lively Rick, who had been itching to get out ever since he was married.

Not that he was not satisfied with the step he had taken, but he really wanted to get into the society of the men he had been so used to associating with.

So when Wild called around to where he was stopping and asked him to take a walk, his wife, Kate, advised him to go.

But she also told him to remember his promise to keep sober on any and all occasions.

As our three friends entered, the fellow Edwards gave an uneasy glance at them.

It was evident that he thought he could not practice his deceit while in the company of Young Wild West.

He was about to take his departure when Brown called him back.

"Wait, Mr. Edwards," he observed. "I want to introduce you to Young Wild West."

There was nothing to do for the man but to come up and face the music.

He was introduced to Wild, Charlie and Rick in the landlord's bluff way, and then without waiting for the subject of the railroad to be opened, he assured them that, as a member of the company which owned the stage coach route, he was heart and soul in the venture.

"I am glad to hear you say that," replied Wild, as he quickly sized him up and came to the conclusion that he was a lying scoundrel. "If you are heart and soul with me in my scheme you are about the only one of your company who is. Your president, Mr. George Jacobs, is very much against it. I am led to believe."

"Well, whoever has led you to believe anything like that is a liar!" Edwards answered, with great vehemence.

"Don't talk quite so plain, Mr. Edwards," said Wild, with one of his quiet smiles. "I was the one who led myself to believe it."

The member of the stage-coach company turned red in the face.

He was at a loss to know what to say.

"Well, if that is the case, you will no doubt admit that some one told you something that caused you to think that way," he hastened to say.

"Never mind about that. You don't want me to go into details, do you? Anyhow, you can't convince me anything different from what I think. In my opinion, the majority of the members of your company are opposed to the new railroad I am working so hard to put through, so that is all there is to it. I don't care to get into any argument about it."

If our hero had not taken a dislike to the man and put him down as a rank fabricator, he would not have talked in this way.

"You are mistaken," Edwards insisted.

"Well, don't say anything more about it, then. I am not going to interfere with your company, and I don't want them to interfere with ours. I am sure we will never try to put you out of business by trying to send one of your outfits over a precipice."

Edwards grew very angry at this, and his hand slid to his revolver.

"Are you insinuating that we had anything to do with what occurred to-day?" he asked, hotly.

"Does the shoe fit you?" answered Wild.

The angered villain now drew his revolver.

"Drop that, or you will be a dead man!" exclaimed Young Wild West.

CHAPTER VIII.

SAFFRON JOE TAKES IN A NEW MEMBER.

Edwards was the picture of amazement for the space of a second.

Then the revolver slid from his hand and dropped to the floor.

"That's it," said Wild. "I like to see people obey me promptly when I command them to do a thing. Now, then, Mr. Edwards, I want to ask you a question. What did you come to Weston for?"

"I was sent here in the interest of the Overland Company," he answered, telling the truth this time.

"To watch the movements of myself and friends, I suppose?"

"No!" lied the rascally fellow, though his gaze dropped before the piercing look that shot from the dark, honest eyes of the young prince of the saddle.

"Well, that is what I think; so you had better be mighty careful how you act while you stay here in town."

Wild put his revolver back in his belt, and walked away from Edwards, just as though he had been simply passing a few friendly words with him.

But Cheyenne Charlie and Lively Rick were keeping an eye on the man, though.

This was not at all necessary, however, as he was too much of a coward to offer to shoot the boy.

He picked up the revolver that he had been forced to drop, and then without a word to any one he left the place. A few minutes later he had mounted his horse and was riding off in the darkness.

"I had better get back to Spondulicks and let Jacobs know how matters stand," he muttered. "Things are getting just a little too hot for me in Weston. That Young Wild West must be a mind-reader, I guess. He sized me up correctly at the first go-off. I could easily fool the rest of them, but it was out of the question to deceive him. It seems mighty strange that he can't be dropped by some one. Those two fellows Jacobs hired are supposed to be the most reckless and unprincipled men in the country, and here they have been fooling around for weeks and have not so much as harmed a hair in his head. I can't understand it."

As he rode along through the darkness Edwards began to think that Young Wild West was going to come out at the top of the heap, after all.

It struck Edwards that no matter whether Young Wild West was put out of the way or not, it would go through, anyway, now.

The man rode on his way till he reached the forks of the road without meeting a soul.

But he had not proceeded far on the road to Spondulicks when a sharp command to halt sounded in his ears.

"Stand and deliver!"

It sounded like the stories Edwards had read of the highwaymen in the days of old, and though he was considerably surprised, he was not much frightened.

But he obeyed the command just the same.

The next moment he was surrounded by half a dozen men wearing masks.

"What do you want, gentlemen?" he asked.

"Your money or your life!" was the quick reply.

"Well, I can't afford to give you either, Saffron Joe. You ought to know better than to hold up a friend."

"Great Jupiter! Is that you, Mr. Edwards?" came the quick reply.

"Yes, it is me. I am glad I met you, too, Joe."

The six men were the gang who had dubbed themselves the "Bloody Six," as the reader no doubt supposes.

After they had escaped from the cave they had remained hidden in the woods on the mountain until they had recovered from the effects of the scare Young Wild West had given them.

Then the man called Spotted Bill had brought up the matter of electing a leader again.

Another vote was taken, and it was a tie between him and Saffron Joe.

The two men were in a quandary.

Both felt that those who were supporting them would stick to them, no matter how many votes were taken.

It took Crafty Keel to help them out of the difficulty.

"I've got a pack of cards," said he. "Why don't you settle ther business by drawing cards? Ther one what gits ther highest card is ter be ther leader. That is a fair an' square way."

"Good enough!" exclaimed Joe. "That jest suits me."

"Me, too!" chimed in Spotted Bill.

Crafty Keel produced the pack of cards and gave them to the two aspirants for leadership to shuffle.

When they had satisfied themselves on this point Crafty Keel took the pack.

"Go ahead an' draw," said he.

Spotted Bill pulled out one of the cards from the pack.

It was the king of spades.

"That's putty good," he observed, shaking his head with satisfaction. "It takes an ace to beat me."

Saffron Joe smiled, showing that he was possessed of lots of confidence.

Then he drew a card.

It was the ace of hearts!

"I knowed it!" he cried, jubilantly. "I felt it in my bones that I was goin' to be your leader, boys! Now, then, I'll jest give you my guarantee that I'll treat you all right. Shake hands, Bill. I hope you are satisfied that it was a square deal."

"It couldn't have been any squarer," was the reply. "You kin depend on it that I'll stick to you," and he shook hands.

Then the rest of them shook hands with the swarthy-faced scoundrel.

"Now," observed Joe, "since we have banded ourselves together to make our livin' at the expense of other people, let's make arrangements to start right in to-night. We'll git over close to ther road and hold up ther first person what comes along. What do you say to that, boys?"

"Good enough!" came the unanimous reply.

"Well, ther first thing to do, then, is to cut ther linin' out of one of our coats an' make masks for ourselves. If we are goin' to be road agents, we might as well go at it in ther right style. Mine an' Keel's horses is somewhere on ther mountain-side, but it won't do to hunt 'em up now. We'll have to trust to luck to git 'em, an' then we'll manage to git four more somewhere in their course of a few days. What we want now is to strike in an' hold ther first feller up what we meet. If we do strike a fellow what shows fight, we'll kill him, an' then we kin christen our band with blood, same as we was goin' to do with that young feller when Young Wild West an' ther friend he had with him tumbled through ther roof of the cave."

This was received with a burst of applause from the men, even the defeated candidate for leader joining in.

They moved over to a convenient spot near the road that ran from Weston to Spondulicks, and in due time they found a man to hold up.

But when it turned out to be a friend in the person of Edwards, whom they had been with the night before, they were not only surprised, but pleased as well.

"Have you turned road agents?" queried Edwards, as he dismounted and followed the men back among the rocks.

"Yes, as a sort of side line while we are waitin' to git a chance at Young Wild West," answered Joe.

"How was it that yon failed to finish him to-day?"

"That is more than I kin tell. He has a charmed life, I guess; 'sides, I can't seem to do a thing when he's got his eyes on me. He's too quick with that gun of his, an' then he sorter takes ther starch out of yer when he looks at yer."

"I know something about that myself. He gave it to me good and strong in Weston to-night."

"Well, it will only be a question of time afore he'll go under. His good luck can't last forever, you know."

"But the railroad is being built all the time. They will have men on the lookout all the time, now, and it won't do to try and tear up the track, or anything like that, for a while, anyway. It strikes me that the road will be finished, whether Young Wild West dies or not."

"If I only had enough men under me—men I could count on—I'd fix this railroad!" and Saffron Joe gritted upon his teeth to emphasize his words. "I would find a place in the mountains here where I could make a stand ag'in a regiment of soldiers, an' I'd defy all ther Young Wild Wests they could rake up. Why! I'll guarantee that with thirty men, like I've got here, I'd be ther boss of this country for a hundred miles around."

These words seemed to have quite an effect upon Edwards.

"By Jove," he said. "I rather believe you are right. You are just the man to lead a band of men. I'll speak to Jacobs about the matter when I see him to-morrow. It may be that

we can help you out. If this railroad can be put out of business it would be money for you fellows, as well as for our company. Look at the travelers you could rob, who would be compelled to travel to and from Weston on horseback!"

"That is what I have been figurin' on this afternoon, since I was chosen leader of the 'Bloody-Six,' as we call ourselves."

"A good name, I should say;" and the villain laughed lightly.

"If there was thirty in my crowd we could call it ther bloody thirty, or whatever ther number might be."

"Oh! of course. That would be an easy matter. Well, I am going on to Spondulicks now, to report. I'll see what I can do with Jacobs, and the chances are that I will meet you here to-morrow night with some horses, and maybe a few men. I won't promise, but I'll do what I can."

"Thank you!" retorted Saffron Joe. "Jest tell Jacobs to turn what money is comin' to me an' Keel into grub an' provisions an' send it along to-morrer night, too. It wouldn't do for us to show up in Spondulicks now, you know."

"All right. Well, good-night!"

"Good-night!"

Edwards rode on through the darkness, and the six villains sat down to wait for some one else to come along.

They were bent upon robbing some one, so they were willing to wait.

And luck was with them, it seemed, for less than half an hour after Edwards had gone hoofbeats were heard coming from the direction of Weston.

"Git ready, boys!" whispered Saffron Joe. "Pull yer masks down, an' have your shooters ready to plug him if he shows fight."

"Mebbe there's more than one of 'em," spoke up Spotted Bill.

"If there is they are on one horse. I reckon I've got a putty good ear, an' it strikes me that there's only one horse comin'. Now, then, out into ther road!"

The next instant the villains were in the road.

"Halt! Stand and deliver!" Joe uttered this command in as impressive a tone as he could command.

Taken completely by surprise, the horseman reined in his steed.

The faint light thrown out from the stars showed him the muzzles of six revolvers pointing his way, and the fact that the men wore masks impressed him all the more.

"Hand over what money an' valnables you have got, stranger!" resumed the captain of the Bloody Six. "Jest move lively, too, 'cause we don't want to stand here all night."

"You wouldn't take the last dollar a man has got, would you?" the horseman asked, when he had recovered from his surprise.

"Certainly we would."

"Well, here it is, then," and he handed over a solitary dollar. "If you fellers kin find any more on me you are welcome to it. I'm in hard luck, an' I want to git over to Spondulicks to see if I can't strike a job."

"What's yer name?" asked Joe, when he had made a thorough search of the man's pockets and found nothing else of value.

"I'm called Crippled Tom, because I've got three of my fingers off. I'm crippled, but I kin deal the cards as well as any one, just the same."

"What kind of a job are you looking for?"

"Well, seeing that you are knights of the road, I don't mind telling you. I am looking for the job of roper in in a gambling house. I've been over at Bowery Bill's place in Weston for a few days, but there ain't anything going on there. I couldn't make enough to pay my lodgin' and buy whisky and

cigars for me. So when my capital got down to just one dollar to-night, I made up my mind all of a sudden that I had better slope. I went out and got my horse, and then lit out without saying a word to Bowery Bill. I suppose he'll feel a little sore about me going so sudden, as I owe him about thirty dollars. But it can't be helped, gentlemen, it can't be helped. Kin I go on about my business now?"

"No! You will go with us!"

"What for?"

"We want you to join our crowd."

"But I ain't no highwayman."

"That makes no difference; you are just as bad, 'cordin' to your own story. You kin be a member of our band an' feller up your gamblin' business when you git in town, too. You ain't got to be with us all the time."

"That's all right enough, but I guess I don't want to join you."

He made a move to ride off as he said this, but Crafty Keel very neatly caught the horse by the bridle.

"No, you don't, Mr. Crippled Tom!" he said. "I reckon that we want your horse, if you won't stay with us yourself."

"That's right," spoke up Spotted Bill, while the rest nodded their approval. "We've got ter have horses, an' there's no use in lettin' this one go."

"Well, we'll take ther man, too, then!" and with that Saffron Joe dealt the horseman a sharp blow on the side of his head with the butt of his pistol.

Crippled Tom, as he called himself, reeled and dropped from the saddle.

The blow had stunned him.

When he came to a few minutes later he found his hands bound behind him and a gag in his mouth.

He had been carried from the road, too, and was in a shallow cave that opened into a dense thicket.

The man's head hurt from the blow he had received, and the gag interfered with his breathing considerably.

As soon as he fully realized his position the unlucky horseman began to struggle and attempt to cry out.

Saffron Joe, who was close by, along with the rest of the villains, stepped over.

"See here," he observed, "I am goin' to fix you so's you kin talk. But if you utter one cry I'll blow off your head. We've been talkin' matters over, an' some of us is in favor of killin' you. Now, if you're goin' to behave yourself an' do as we want you to, jest shake your right foot."

Crippled Tom lost no time in shaking his right foot, and then with a nod of satisfaction Joe removed the gag from his mouth.

The light from a dark-lantern was flashed upon him while this was being done, and the villains could see that their captive was very pale.

"Are you going to change your mind?" asked Joe.

"Yes," was the reply. "I'll do anything you want me to."

"Will you join our crowd?"

"Yes; I'll be only too glad to. I thought you was foolin' when you asked me before."

"Will you swear never to go back on us an' obey all orders?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll untie you."

This was done, and the next minute Crippled Tom was standing on his feet rubbing his sore head.

"How are you goin' to prove to us that you mean all you have said?" asked Saffron Joe, after a pause.

"I don't know," was the reply. "But if you catch me goin' back on you, why, you can kill me, that's all."

"I guess that'll do. Crippled Tom, you kin consider yourself a member of our band!"

CHAPTER IX.

FIFTEEN MEN WITH BAGS OF GOLD DUST.

The next day Young Wild West was kept pretty busy at the company's office.

There were a whole lot of details to go over that required his personal attention, and he showed that he could work like a beaver when he got right down to it.

True, such work was not exactly to his liking, but it had to be done, and so he was the one to do it.

He liked to be in the open air as much as possible. It seemed that he had been born to lead an outdoor life, and he was never happier than in the saddle and engaged in some sort of excitement.

Jim Dart and Rex Moore, the bookkeeper, worked faithfully with him all day long, and when night came Moore was the only one of the three who was not pretty well tired out.

He was used to that sort of employment, and he laughed when he heard the two boys complain of being tired, as the office was closed for the day.

However, in spite of the hard day's work, there was more to be done that night.

In the vaults of the little stone building known as the Bank of Weston there was a pile of gold belonging to the Wild West Mining and Improvement Company, which, according to agreement, was to be shipped to Spondulicks, so it would be there the first thing in the morning.

No one was aware of this save our friends and the parties it was to be delivered to.

Wild had said nothing about when he thought it would be the best time to take the gold over till that afternoon.

Then he told Jim and the rest that they would start out at four the following morning with it.

"I don't think there is a single outsider who knows a word about it," he said to Jim. "But still, I think we had better take about fifteen good men and go over with it. I have not even told the people at the bank that I want it to go so it will get there by the first thing to-morrow morning, but that will be all right, I guess, as I am one of the bank directors."

"Of course it will be all right," was the rejoinder. "You just pick out the fifteen men who are to go, and we can wait till a quarter of an hour before starting time to notify them what is required of them. I'll wager that they will all be ready in time unless it is sickness that interferes."

"Well, I will pick out the men after supper. Then I will delegate you to notify the men when the proper time comes. You see, it will be the biggest pile of dust that we have ever sent away at one time. It goes as the first payment on the locomotives and cars we have bought. They cost a whole lot of money, as everything else connected with the railroad does. We are lucky that we won't be any more in debt than one-third of the entire cost."

"That is true. I suppose we should consider that we are lucky, but when it is all done we won't have hardly a dollar in the treasury."

"Don't let that worry you. Walter Jenkins told me this morning that he had struck another lode on the original Widow's Claim. That claim has been the secret of all our success here in the hills, you know. If I hadn't been lucky enough to shoot straight and win it when it was put up as the prize in a shooting match, it is hard to tell how any of us would be

situated to-day. I tell you, Jim, there has been times when it looked as though we had bitten off more than we could chew; but every time something turned up to see us through, and chuck a whole lot of wealth in our way, at the same time."

"Those are true words, Wild," said Jim, taking the hand of his best friend and squeezing it warmly. "I won't say that it was the Widow's Claim that made us so successful; I will say it was you. If it had not been for you where would any of us have been? Charlie and Jack would most likely have still been down at Fort Bridges as Government scouts, and I would have been with them, if I had luck enough. And where would this town have been? Why, it would not have been on the map at all! Young Wild West, you have made the town and made the fortunes of your friends. I often think of it, and when you spoke of the Widow's Claim just now, I could not help saying how I felt on the subject."

Young Wild West laughed.

"That is all right, Jim," he said. "Don't give me the credit of too much. We have all had pretty good luck, and we ought to be thankful for it."

"Well, I am, anyway."

"So am I. There is nothing that succeeds like success, they say, and if we keep pushing along we will be bound to win out in this railroad game. Why, I have it from one of the directors of the branch that they are sorry they did not accede to my proposition and build the new road themselves. Unless I am very much mistaken, the company will be wanting to buy us out before the road is in operation six months."

"Would you advise selling if that should be the case?"

"Certainly, if we could get our price. That is the way to do business, you know. We do not really want the road on our hands, anyway, for we have quite enough to do to attend to our business, should people flock in to settle here."

"That is true," and Jim nodded as though he had never thought on that line before.

The two boys went to bed a little early, without so much as saying a word to Cheyenne Charlie about what was in the wind.

Neither of them were of the sort who would oversleep themselves, as their experience while on the plains had taught them to awaken at any time.

Jim was the first to awaken, and looking at his watch, he found it was a few minutes after three.

He aroused Wild, and then the two dressed and made ready for the journey.

"I will attend to the horses," our hero said. "You go and tell the thirteen who are to go with us to be at the bank at four o'clock, no later. I will see to it that the bank is open so we can get the bags of dust. The order I have for them calls for them to be delivered at any time I want them."

"All right," replied Jim, and a few minutes later he was doing his errand.

There were to be just fifteen men, tried and true, in the party, and besides Wild and himself, Cheyenne Charlie, Jack Robedee, Lively Rick, Dove-Eye Dave, who, by the way, was president of the bank, Brown, old man Murdock, Jim's father, and some others who could be trusted at any stage of the game.

The chances were that the precautions Young Wild West was taking were unnecessary, but he was not the one to be caught napping.

If the gold was stolen from them the company would be ruined, virtually, as it would be unable to meet its obligations without calling on people from Spondulicks.

Therefore it was best to be ready for anything that might turn up.

Our hero was satisfied that nothing short of a regiment of soldiers could take the last of dust away from his party.

Every man among them would defend it with his life, if necessary.

When Wild had the horse in readiness, he aroused the man who had the keys of the bank and had charge of the big stone vault underneath the bank.

"I want you to open the bank at promptly four o'clock," he said. "I want to take the gold out that is there to the credit of the Wild West Mining and Improvement Company. Here is the order."

"That's all right, Wild," answered the man, rubbing his eyes to get himself thoroughly awake. "I'll be on hand."

"You have got just eighteen minutes."

"That will give me plenty of time," and he took the order, to show it, should it be needed.

He was not only the cashier of the little bank, but one of the stockholders in the company.

When Jim came back to the house it lacked just five minutes of four.

Day was just breaking, and he found Wild waiting for him with his horse.

"They will all be there," he said.

"Good! Now we will mount and ride over to the bank."

Wild sprang upon the back of his faithful horse Spitfire, and Jim followed suit by mounting his steed.

Then the two rode over to the bank at a gentle trot.

They had plenty of time to get there, as it was not far distant.

When they had come to a halt in front of the building it lacked but one minute to four.

The cashier came along at that very moment and unlocked the door.

Our two young friends dismounted and tied their horses to a neighboring tree, and as they did so they heard horses coming from all directions.

When it was exactly four all of the fifteen assembled there.

Wild took the trouble to speak to each one separately, and then each knew what was required of him.

Jim Dart then went inside the building and came out almost immediately.

Then one by one the rest went in and came out as quickly.

Our hero was the last one to do this, and when he came out he carried a bag of gold dust in each of the pockets of his coat.

And the other fourteen were fixed in the same manner.

Bidding the cashier and the watchman of the bank good-morning, our friends rode off with Young Wild West at their head.

As each man had a portion of the gold on his person, it would be next to an impossibility for it all to be taken from them, even if they were defeated in an attack from road agents.

Every man was armed to the teeth, and nearly every one of them was an excellent shot with both rifle and revolver.

By the time the sun arose the little band was well on the way to their destination.

Few of them had ever been on a trip of this kind, and they all seemed to enjoy it.

They were positive that no one knew they were going to Spondulicks that morning with so much gold in the party.

But if any one did try to take it from them, then look out.

There would have been some desperate fighting, and little mercy would have been shown.

"Talk and joke as much as you have a mind to, boys, but keep your eyes open first, last and all the time," Wild told them.

He did not want them to ride along as though they were in a funeral procession.

The men rode along at a good pace, and soon half the distance to Spondulicks was covered.

There was a portion of the road right along here that Wild always felt a trifle uneasy about when he went over it.

He had been shot at by hidden foes more than once right around there, and that was enough to make him keep an extra sharp watch.

Jim thought about this as they turned into the fork that led to Spondulicks.

"Wild," said he, "we are getting close to the place where the fellows generally lie in ambush for you. It would be a great thing if a whole band were to come out now and try to get our gold dust from us."

"I am keeping a good lookout up among the rocks and stunted pines," was the reply. "I am— Ah!"

"What's the matter, Wild?" asked Jim, excitedly, for he knew instantly that something was wrong.

"I saw a man sneaking along that little ridge up there," and the young prince of the saddle unslung his rifle as he spoke.

The next minute the rifle flew to his shoulder and—
Crack!

"A man was just taking aim at me, or some one in the party," he remarked. "There he comes down here!"

The body of a man came tumbling down the scraggy descent, and landed almost at their feet.

Cheyenne Charlie had dismounted the instant he saw the body start to roll down.

"You have done a great thing in shooting that fellow, Wild," said he, with something like a ring of triumph in his voice. "It is Crafty Keel, the biggest sneak that ever lived."

The party had come to a halt, and Wild now began riding up and down along the center of the road, his gaze directed to where the dead villain had been.

He felt certain that his companions were up there somewhere.

But none of them dared show themselves, or even send a shot from ambush, it seemed.

Leaving the body of Crafty Keel where it had fallen, our friends rode on to Spondulicks, reaching it without anything further happening.

CHAPTER X.

SOME EXCITEMENT IN SPONDULICKS.

It was not yet six o'clock in the morning when the party of fifteen rode into Spondulicks and up to the bank where the gold dust was to be deposited for the firm who had supplied the necessary equipments to run the railroad.

It had been arranged that it should be delivered there the first thing in the morning, before banking hours, and that the cashier and one of the members of the company would be there to receive it.

Wild dismounted, and while Jim held the bridle-rein of his horse he ran up the steps to the door of the bank.

It was opened before he could touch it, which showed that the parties in Spondulicks had kept their part of the agreement as well as he had.

Wild saw that the man who had opened the door was the man he had done the business with in making the purchases for the new road.

He gave the word to his men outside, and one by one they fell in, the same as they had in the bank over in Weston before starting on the trip.

In a few minutes the gold dust was weighed and deposited, and then our hero was given a receipt for the amount.

"Now for breakfast," said Young Wild West, mounting his horse. "We will go over and see if Ryan has got anything in the house to eat."

All hands were pretty hungry, and Ryan, who had just got up, was astonished to see them when they rode up and dismounted, calling loudly for their breakfast.

"What does this mean, Wild?" he asked in surprise. "Just got in town, or have you been here all night?"

"Just got here, and we want something to eat. You ought to know that if we had been here all night we would certainly have stopped with you. Come! What can you give us for breakfast?"

"I don't know exactly. Yes, I do, too. I can give you fried bacon and eggs, bread, potatoes and coffee. How will that strike you?"

For an answer the men gave a cheer.

Now that all the worry and excitement of their errand to Spondulicks was over, the majority of the men were inclined to be a little boyish in their actions, and they began "cutting it up," as old Sam Murdock put it.

The fun was just getting high when Wild happened to look up the street.

Then he gave a start and paid no more attention to the antics of the men from Weston.

Coming up the street were a dozen or more horsemen, with George Jacobs, the president of the Overland Company, among them.

"I wonder where that gang is bound?" he asked himself. "A bad looking lot, I must say. I guess they will bear watching if they should happen to be making for Weston. That fellow Edwards is a tricky fellow, and now I am sure that he was over to Weston yesterday for no good."

The horsemen were soon lost to sight, and then the young prince of the saddle turned his attention to his companions again.

Dove-Eye Dave was standing treat for the crowd, and as our hero turned around he called him up to get the best cigar in the house.

"All right," was the reply. "I'll smoke it after I put away my bacon and eggs."

The biggest part of the party were used to taking a drink of something strong now and then, and the bottle was being passed along the bar to them.

Before they could get any more than two rounds of the fiery stuff the bell rang for breakfast.

They ran like a lot of schoolboys in their efforts to be first to sit down at the table.

The landlord had counted them, and he had a table with just fifteen plates on it, so it made no difference who was first, or who was last.

Young Wild West was one of the last to leave the barroom, and as he did so he chanced to look out of the window and saw Jacobs coming on foot.

A little behind him came Edwards and another man, both walking.

This set him to thinking again.

"What has become of the extra horses, I wonder?" he thought. "Well, if one of them was for Crafty Keel, as he called himself, he will have no need for it now. Well, never mind. I shan't worry over the gang of horsemen. It will be time enough to do that when they give me cause to."

He went into the dining-room and was soon enjoying the breakfast as much as any of them.

When all had eaten as much as they ought to, and were about to leave the table, Wild gave them a few words of advice about the whisky question, and then lighting his cigar,

got up and went out of the hotel along with Jim Dart and Cheyenne Charlie.

He wanted to see Coville, the superintendent of the branch road that had its terminal there.

In going to the depot, where Coville had his office, Anderson's gambling place had to be passed, but our friends were not the sort to cross to the opposite side of the street to avoid it.

As they came to the place they saw Anderson standing in front of it twisting his mustache and putting on lots of airs.

But he seemingly paid no attention to them as they went by, and so they hardly looked at him.

Coville was not at his office yet, and looking at his watch, our hero saw what was the matter.

It was a trifle too early for offices to open.

While they were waiting around the depot the first morning train came in.

Quite a few passengers alighted, and then the trainmen began to unload a large quantity of freight.

Wild was interested in sizing up the passengers who got off.

There were all classes among them, from a rich man to a beggar.

There was one well-dressed but coarse-looking man among them, who stood all alone on the platform for fully a minute, picking his teeth and looking up and down the street.

"That fellow is a first-class rogue, I feel certain," Wild whispered to his companions. "I can generally tell a man by his cut. I'll bet that he did not come out West to make an honest living."

"I am of that opinion myself," replied Jim, and Charlie nodded to show that it was the same with him.

Our friends had scarcely expressed themselves this way when the man in question walked deliberately up to them, and depositing his grip on the platform in front of Wild, said:

"Kin any of you gents tell me where Andy Anderson's place is? This is a larger town than I thought it was, an' I guess I hadn't better waste a whole lot of time huntin' for it."

"It is right down the street on the left, about five minutes' walk," Wild answered, because the question appeared to be directed at him more than the others.

"Thanks, young feller. Do you know Andy?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Who shall I tell him it was who directed me to his place, then?"

"Just tell him it was Young Wild West."

"Young Wild West, hey? All right; I'm much obliged to yer. I'll go right on down. About five minutes' walk, hey?"

"Yes. You will see the sign, so you can't miss it."

The three walked around till finally the superintendent showed up.

"I have called to learn if your company has agreed to my proposition in regard to the switching of trains from your line to ours," Wild said.

"Yes; they have agreed in every detail," was the reply.

Wild and his companions lingered at the office of the superintendent a little while longer, and then with the understanding that the necessary papers would be drawn up by the Grand Island people, they took their departure.

As they neared the gambling saloon of Anderson on their way back they suddenly heard a clattering of hoofs and lots of yelling.

The next minute they saw Lively Rick and half a dozen cowboys riding down the street toward them in a very reckless fashion.

Rick had met some old friends while they had been gone, and he had taken just about two drinks too much.

Then nothing must do but that he join his old cronies in making things howl, as they called it, for awhile.

Lively Rick was right alongside the leader of the cowboys when our friends caught sight of him.

He had his revolver in his left hand and was swinging his lariat with his right.

And each of the half dozen in his company were doing the same thing.

As they neared Anderson's place a Chinaman started across the street in a hurry to get out of their way, for evidently he knew what a lot of drunken cowboys were liable to do.

"Whoo-peee! Whoo-peee!"

The reckless plainsmen howled their familiar cry, and every one of them got ready to lasso the Chinaman.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The leader discharged his revolver three times, and that was the signal to get go the lariats.

Wild, Charlie and Jim were right on the sidewalk in front of the gambling place as this happened, and they could not help but watch the antics of the reckless men.

Every man in the party let his lariat go, that of Lively Rick coming straight for the head of Young Wild West, it seemed.

Our hero sprang out of the way, and was just in time to see a man behind him get the noose right around the neck!

During the brief look that he had at the man's face before the fellow was jerked from his feet with force enough to break his neck, Wild recognized him as the man who had asked the way to Anderson's in the depot that morning.

A long-bladed knife dropped from his hand as he was dragged out into the street, and then our hero realized that he had had a narrow escape.

Young Wild West did not move from his place in front of the saloon, but drew his revolvers.

Anderson and Jacobs were standing in the doorway.

They attempted to go inside when they saw the action of the prince of the saddle.

"Stay right where you are!" he commanded loud enough for them to hear.

"What is the matter, Young Wild West?" asked Jacobs.

"You ought to know, if any one does. Didn't you see what happened just now?"

"I saw a man just jerked off his feet by a lariat in the hands of a drunken cowboy," was the reply.

"Didn't you see the man who got treated that way have a knife in his hand ready to stick it in my back?"

"No."

"You lie!"

This was said by Lively Rick, who had galloped up to the spot and dismounted at that moment.

CHAPTER XI.

WAITING IN AMBUSH.

"Take it easy, Rick," said Wild. "Tell just why you lassoed the man who stood behind me."

"I lassoed him 'cause jest as I was goin' to let go at ther Chinaman I seen him sneakin' up to stick a knife in you, Wild! I was afraid I'd miss, but I didn't. There's ther knife now!" and he pointed to it lying on the sidewalk.

By this time the cowboys had let the Chinaman go, and they came right upon the sidewalk with their horses.

"What's ther matter, Rick?" called out their leader.

"Oh, I jest choked off ther wind of a coyote that was goin' to stab Young Wild West from behind, that's all," was the reply.

"Young Wild West, hey? Where is he?"

"Here he is!" and Rick pointed our hero out.

Then the cowboys gave a cheer for Young Wild West which made the welkin ring.

As soon as it had partly died out our hero raised his hand for silence.

"Boys," said he, "what Rick just said is true. While I was watching you all to see which of you would noose the Chinaman first, a man sneaked up behind me to stick a knife in my back. Rick happened to see him, and instead of throwing his lariat for the Mongolian, he let it go at the would-be assassin. He caught him and he lies out there in the gutter as dead as he will ever be, I guess. Now, let me tell you why this man tried to kill me. He only arrived in town this morning, and it was I who directed him to this place, in answer to a civil question from him as to where it was. He was a bad man from somewhere in the East, and he was hired to come out here and kill me, just because there are some people here in Spondulicks don't want to see the new railroad go through. I am not going to name the people who hired him to stick a knife in me, but I know them, and I want to say right here that their race will soon be run if they don't leave this vicinity. Now, boys, if you will ride up to Ryan's Hotel I'll stand treat for the best cigars he has in the house, but no whisky. Jacobs and Anderson, you can now go inside. You have heard what I had to say!"

The cowboys gave another hearty cheer for Young Wild West, almost everybody within hearing joining in.

"Of course we'll smoke with you!" cried their leader. "Come on, boys. Whoo-pee!"

Lively Rick rode along with them, and Wild, Charlie and Jim walked on after them.

They looked behind them as they walked away, and when they had covered about a hundred feet they saw two men come out of the gambling saloon and pick up the body from the gutter and carry it in the building.

Our friends went on over to Ryan's, and about two hours later they started for Weston, as it took that length of time for Wild to get the men in line, so inclined were they to have a good time in town.

But let us turn our attention to the villains who had been cowed by Young Wild West after the lassoing of the fellow who had been in the act of stabbing him.

If ever two men were angered, Jacobs and Anderson were.

"What do you think of that?" cried Jacobs, slamming his fist upon the bar, as they got safely inside the place.

"That Young Wild West certainly has all the luck on his side," was the reply.

"Ther man we thought would be sure to finish him got finished before he hardly began. We thought sure he would do it, as he was recommended as a feller that would shoot or knife a man under any conditions, so long as he was paid for it."

"Well, I feel sorry for him."

Anderson then told the bartender and another man who hung around the place to go out and bring the body inside.

This was done, as the reader already knows.

"What do you propose to do now?" asked the president of the stage-coach line.

"I don't know, unless it is to ride right over to Saffron Joe's headquarters an' lay for Young Wild West an' his gang when he goes back, an' finish 'em right out an' have done with it."

"I guess that is about ther only thing to do. I don't like what Young Wild West said a few minutes ago. He will certainly make it warm for us, if he is let to live."

The two supplied themselves with a big bottle of whisky apiece, and then went out by the back way and got their horses from the stable.

Mounting them, they rode across lots until they were out of sight of Ryan's Hotel, and then taking the road, they galloped swiftly toward their destination, which was near the ~~fork~~ of the road.

The nearer they got to the place the more desperate they became.

Jacobs now felt that he had gone as far as he dared and let Young Wild West live.

They were riding along slowly looking for it when they were hailed by a voice that came from the rocks above them.

The next instant they looked up and saw Saffron Joe waving his hat to them.

"Ride around to ther left an' come on up," he called out to them.

The two desperate villains did so.

"What's ther matter?" asked the swarthy leader of the gang, looking at them in surprise. "We didn't expect to see you up here."

"We have come up to play our last card," answered Jacobs.

"What do yer mean?"

"Young Wild West an' his gang have got to die when they try to pass here on their way back. That's what I mean!"

"Oh! all right. You kin depend on us—that is, all but Keel!"

"Why, what is the matter with Crafty Keel?" questioned Anderson.

"He's dead an' buried. We planted him early this mornin'."

"What happened to him?"

"Young Wild West shot him."

"Well, come on back here an' we'll tell ther boys what's up. Them fellers you sent over this mornin' are all right, an' we've got another who'll do first-rate, too. Countin' you two, there's nineteen of us, an' there's fifteen who went over in Young Wild West's gang."

"Well, let it go at that, then. We outnumber them, an' if we take 'em by surprise we ought to finish 'em in short order."

Saffron Joe now led them to the camp of the band, which was located in a little hollow well concealed from view.

The band of outlaws listened to what was told them, and then all but one of them signified his willingness to make the fight.

The one who demurred was Crippled Tom.

Saffron Joe became so exasperated that he shot the man dead in his tracks.

Then the band began to get in shape for what was before them.

They rolled big stones out close to the face of the cliff, so they could lie behind them and shoot without exposing themselves.

Their rifles and revolvers were carefully examined to make sure that there would be no miss fires, and then they sat down to wait.

After what seemed to be a very long time they heard the sounds of approaching hoofs.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Young Wild West and his party took it easy coming back. When they got well on the road to Weston our hero was keeping a good lookout for danger.

As they neared the place where Wild had shot Crafty Keel he called them to a halt.

"Boys," he said, "I have reason to believe that we are going to have some trouble before we get home. I saw about a dozen men start this way while you fellows were at the bar in Ryan's waiting for breakfast. The man who started them off was one of the rascals who is trying so hard to kill me and stop the new road from going through. That is why I think a job has been put up. And the fact that it was right over here a ways where the coward forced me to shoot him makes me think that the men who were sent over this way

came to join the ones who tried to send the engine and car over the precipice. Now, I want you all to do just as I say, and if I am right in my belief, we won't lose a man."

On galloped Wild until he was within a hundred feet of the spot where Crafty Keel had dropped from the rocks under his unerring aim.

Then he wheeled to the left suddenly and started up a rugged slope.

The next instant a rifle shot rang out and a bullet whizzed past his head; but he did not stop.

He was waiting for a sight of the enemy.

And just then he did catch sight of more than one of them.

Taken completely by surprise at the attack of those they had been waiting in ambush for, the villainous gang fled for cover, firing as they ran.

"Give it to them, boys!" cried Wild, and then his repeating rifle began to crack right and left.

At least ten of the band of desperadoes went down in almost as many seconds.

But there were three men in the gang whom Wild had caught a fleeting glimpse of, and though he was surprised at seeing two of them there, he was no less determined to have them, dead or alive.

The three were Saffron Joe, Jacobs and Anderson.

Our hero took note of the fact that they had disappeared on a sort of path that led to the road below on the opposite side of the hill.

Wheeling his horse and leaving his companions to chase the rest of the gang as they saw fit, he turned down the slope and dashed around into the road.

There was a bend ahead of him, and he thought that if the trio was still upon the road he would catch sight of them as he rounded it.

And he was right, too, for as he came around he was just in time to see the scoundrels taking to the bushes on the right.

But just then a rifle cracked and a bullet grazed the boy's wrist and knocked his rifle from his hand.

Nothing daunted he dashed on, drawing his revolver as he did so.

Two shots were fired by him, and one of the men dropped at the edge of the bushes.

The others were well under cover, and as his wrist was bleeding profusely, Wild did not attempt to follow them.

Dismounting, he bound his handkerchief around his wound, and then walked over to see which of the villains he had dropped.

It was George Jacobs. He had been shot in the back of the neck, and death must have been instantaneous.

Just then Charlie came riding up.

"What is ther matter, Wild?" he asked.

"Oh, Saffron Joe grazed my wrist and knocked my rifle from my hands with a bullet," was the reply.

"And you fixed him for it?"

"No; that fellow lying there is George Jacobs, the prime mover in the fight against the railroad. He will never bother us again."

"That is one good thing, anyway."

The two waited till the rest came up.

There was one man pretty badly wounded from a bullet in the thigh, and three others had received scratches.

And against this, the outlaws had lost eleven men, and how many wounded our friends did not know.

"Boys," said Cheyenne Charlie, when they were all in the saddle ready to go home, "if it had not been for Young Wild West's eyes in seein' ther gang ride out of Spondulicks this mornin' an' come this way, it are most likely that some of

ns would have been corpses now. I tell you, boys, there wa never a leader like Young Wild West, an' this railroad of ours is goin' through with bells on."

As every one was of the same opinion, the cheer that went up was a loud one.

The ride back to Weston was made in due time.

Wild did not organize a committee to hunt up the villains on the mountain-side. He was too much interested in pushing the railroad through to bother with them.

The work kept right on, and nearly a week before the time our hero had said it would be done the first train was ready to leave Spondulicks for the terminal at Weston.

This was a great day for the people of the hustling little mining town, and the favored ones who were to make up the train-load, which consisted of three cars, were almost wild with joy.

Young Wild West took his place in the engine, the same as he had done when the first passenger train car went half the distance.

But somehow, he felt that nothing was going to happen on this day.

And he was right, too, for the trip was made without mishap, and all Weston was overjoyed.

Two days later the trains began running regularly.

The first month there was not enough business to make it pay, but at the end of the second things were working along satisfactorily.

But the money was not coming in fast enough to pay off the debt the company owed, not if it was all saved for a period of six months or a year.

Young Wild West was forced to look to the Widow's Claim to raise the money.

But that money belonged to Young Wild West, Jim Dart, Cheyenne Charlie and Jack Robedee, who were partners on the four original claims that had been in operation before the Wild West Mining and Improvement Company had been organized.

But they put the money in to pay off the debt and took bonds for it, which would mature in five years.

Shortly after the debt had been paid a stranger came over to Weston on one of the trains and inquired for Young Wild West.

"I am a representative from the main office of the Grand Island Railroad," he said, when he had been introduced to our hero. "I have called over to learn whether you want to sell your railroad or not."

"Well, we do want to sell it, but we want just what it is worth, though," replied Wild.

"What is your asking price?"

"One million dollars cash."

"Do you mean that, or are you joking?"

"I certainly mean it."

"It is altogether too much."

"Well, you people don't have to buy, you know. If the price don't suit you you can let it alone."

"I will let you hear from us inside of a month," said the man as he went away.

And so Young Wild West's great scheme had been a success, after all that had been said and done.

Next week's issue will contain "YOUNG WILD WEST AND THE TRAIN ROBBERS, OR, THE HUNT FOR THE STOLEN TREASURE."

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE.

CURRENT NEWS

Mrs. George W. Widdifield, of Columbia City, Ind., wife of a merchant of that place, was able to leave for her home after an operation at a local hospital in which forty wire nails, which she swallowed a year ago, were removed from her stomach.

Fourteen years ago when Charles Milleson, a farmer near Gypsum, Kan., paid his harvest hands he missed a \$10 bill, and concluded that he had been robbed. The other day Mrs. Milleson picked up an old pocketbook the children had been playing with for ten or twelve years, and between the lining and the pocket the missing \$10 was found.

Two American warships, the cruisers Raleigh and New Orleans, have been ordered to Guaymas, on the west coast of Sonora, to investigate and report the facts as to the attack made by Mexican Yaqui Indians on a colony of Americans, including women and children, near Esperanza, south of Guaymas. The Yaquis have gone on the war-path in a movement which is independent of the Carranza and Villa factions.

Triplex glass is now appearing on the market in many forms, especially in Great Britain, where it has caught the fancy of motorists. The glass is made into limousine windows, windshields, goggles, etc. It consists of two sheets of thin glass with a thin sheet of xylonite between them, the whole three sheets being combined by glucose and hydraulic pressure into a homogeneous mass. It cannot be shattered into splinters by any agency. It will crack and break under hammer blows, but no splinters will fly, endangering people.

According to a report of his excavations in Egypt, Dr. Fisher, leader of the Eekley B. Cox expedition, under the auspices of the University of Pennsylvania, believes he has found the site of the ancient palace of Rameses II., at the site of the ancient Memphis. On the surface is the ruin of an old Roman fort, underneath that the ruins of a Ptolemaic city, while Memphis is far below. Considerable money has been uncovered, including 250 coins of the times of the Ptolemies. Dr. Fisher feels confident that rapid progress will now be made in getting down to the old Egyptian city.

Jesse Ropp, the ten-year-old son of A. R. Ropp, a wealthy farmer of Lee Centre, Ill., went into the barn recently to water his pony. When he failed to return at night a posse of farmers was organized and the neighborhood searched, but he could not be found. Later three bloodhounds from the Aurora city kennels were sent to Lee Centre. They had gone but a few feet when the lost boy crawled from under the barn and called to his father to have the mare helters taken away. He hid under the barn, he said, because he was afraid his father would whip him for not doing chores.

In the strong box of the Lusitania at the bottom of the sea off the Irish coast is approximately \$5,000,000 of money, foreign exchange, and other valuables belonging to Chicago people. Of this treasure \$3,000,000 consists of foreign exchange belonging to the First National Bank. This paper was largely duplicated before it left the local bank, and it is not expected that the actual loss will be great. Had the Postoffice Department not prescribed shortly before the Lusitania's departure that mails intended for her be specifically directed to the ship, the amount of Chicago treasure aboard her would have been much greater. The Illinois Trust and Savings Bank and the Continental and Commercial National Bank are congratulating themselves that the bulk of their mails missed the liner.

It has been discovered that soap, plain, common washing soap, is a deadly poison to prairie dogs. John F. Braun, a farmer near Miltonvale, Kan., had about 100 prairie dogs on his farm, and started in to wipe them out. He used traps. After he had caught about thirty the rest got wise and would walk around his traps. Among the thirty was one that the trap didn't injure, and he put it in a cage for a pet. By mistake his children fed the prairie dog in the cage a small piece of common soap one day. Within five minutes the prairie dog was dead. Mr. Braun decided to experiment. He cut a bar of soap into small pieces, about the size of a hazel nut in "dog town." The next day there wasn't a solitary prairie dog left to tell the story. All were dead. Ten cents' worth of soap will clear a big farm of prairie dogs. The results, as shown by Mr. Braun, eclipsed results from the dope which the agricultural college sends out to kill prairie dogs.

The river systems of Colombia are the chief channels of commerce. The greatest of those arteries is the Magdalena, which is 1,100 miles long from its source to its mouth, but through river traffic is impracticable because of a series of rapids at Dorada, 600 miles from the sea. River boats of four-foot draught navigate to Dorada, whence a railway has been built around the rapids to Honda. Next to the Magdalena the most important river is the Cauca, 500 miles long, which empties into the Magdalena 200 miles from the mouth. The Cauca is navigable in sections only, since there are many rapids. The railway system of Colombia is the key to the future development of the country. There are numerous short and disconnected lines, but until some of these are linked together no effective plan of exploiting the vast natural resources of the country can be consummated. The total length of all the lines now in operation is about 600 miles. In most cases the gauge is three feet. Ultimately there will be a through line paralleling the Magdalena from the mouth to its source. At present the section between Dorada around the rapids to Honda and thence on to Ambalema is the only connecting link in this line. It will, however, be extended to Girardot.

The Fate of Philip Funk

—OR—

LEFT IN THE LAND OF FIRE

By "PAWNEE JACK"

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XX (continued)

"I am over here, Tom!" he called in what no doubt seemed to him a very low voice.

The acoustic properties of this cave must indeed have been very remarkable.

The sound came to Tom like a prolonged low hiss, but he was able to locate the direction, and he hurried on until he came to another of those slit-like openings in the wall on his right, the passage, or narrow cave, going further on still.

"I'm here, Tom!" George's voice spoke again, and there he was peering out through the slit, through which he could not possibly pass, but up overhead it was much wider.

"Thank heaven I have found you!" cried Tom.

He looked in through the opening.

Here was another cave, much larger than the one he was in.

Scattered all about were hundreds of dwarfish skeletons.

It was the deadhouse of the Fuegians, and there, standing among the skeletons, were Susie, George and Jeff.

"This is our prison!" explained Susie. "I was seized by the dwarfs, dragged down through the hole and let down by a hide rope into this horrible tomb, the only opening into it except the one where we are now being fifteen feet over our heads."

"That's the trouble," said George. "We can't possibly get out by the way we were put in. The dog Ned jumped down to Susie when she was first lowered into this hole, and then he managed to spring up and get out by that hole over your head, Tom. I've tried to do the same thing by standing on Jeff's shoulders, but I've failed each time. We were just going to try it again when you came along."

This was George's simple story.

Why the Fuegians had put their prisoners into this horrible pit along with the bones of their dead friends was something that could only be guessed at, for the language of these dwarfs is entirely incomprehensible to every one, so they could not have explained their reasons for this strange act even if they had tried.

Tom had the story of his discoveries to tell while he stood there by the slit.

George listened to it all in great excitement.

"I knew it!" he cried. "When I first took up with you, Tom Hall, I felt that you would be the one to discover the Uriate treasure, and you have done it. But what good can it do us situated as we are?"

George grew quite excited about the treasure.

Jeff did not seem to care a rap about it, but kept chattering away about how they could get out even while Tom was telling his story.

As for Susie, she seemed to care more for the fate of poor Ned than anything else.

She declared that she had now lost her last friend, and wept so freely for the dog that Tom began to think that her troubles had turned the poor girl's head.

"Come!" exclaimed Tom, who was really the only practical one of the party; "there's no use in all this. We have got to do something definite, and now is our time while the dwarfs are all away. There's powder back there in the treasure cave, and plenty of fuse, and I've got matches. If you are not afraid I believe I could blow down this wall of rock."

"I wonder if you couldn't!" cried George. "It's certainly a great idea."

"How big is your cave in there?" asked Tom. "I can't see."

"Oh, it's large enough," replied George. "A hundred feet long, at least, and skeletons of the dwarfs scattered all about everywhere."

"You have looked in every direction and followed the walls all around to see if there isn't some way of getting out?"

"Yo' bet we have!" answered Jeff. "I done all dat afore Mars George was let down hyar. Dar hain't no way, Tom—none in de world."

"Then I'll try it," said Tom. "Just be patient now for a few minutes and I'll agree to wake the echoes of this old place as they have never been wakened before."

Tom was a worker by instinct, and he went right at it now.

Hurrying back to the treasure cave, he provided himself with a long piece of fuse from one of several coils which lay near the powder, and, carefully lifting one of the kegs of powder from the pile, succeeded in rolling it to the slit in the wall, where he set it right up against the rock, and, boring a hole with his knife at the bottom, carefully inserted the fuse.

"Well, I'm all ready now," he said. "You better all get back."

"I expect the noise will deafen us," said George. "I look to have it burst the drum of my ears."

"Get back! Get back!" cried Tom, and he stooped

down and lighted the fuse, retreating himself to the very end of the long cave.

It was a long wait, but the explosion came at last.

No words can describe the tremendous effect.

To say that the report was "thunderous" or deafening does not half express it.

It was tremendous beyond belief, and following it came an awful crash.

But Tom had done the work.

The wall was thrown down between the two caves for the distance of at least six feet, and Susie, George and Jeff came out through the opening none the worse for their shaking up.

Waiting only to take one look at the skeletons, Tom led them into the treasure cave, where Jeff went wild over the money, as a matter of course.

"Now is our time to follow this thing up," said Tom. "In spite of the noise of the explosion we don't hear a thing from the dwarfs, and for my part I don't believe there are any of them in the outer cave where their camp is. What's the matter with pushing away the big stone, if we can, and getting out on the beach?"

George had no objection to offer to this, and they all went at it together.

It hardly needed so much strength. There was little trouble in rolling the stone away, and a moment later all hands stood on the beach, looking off upon the Straits of Magellan.

A sharp exclamation burst simultaneously from the lips of all.

It was there!

A ship under half sail was heading directly for the deep cove in front of the cave.

"It's the Sutton!" cried George. "You see, Tom?"

"Thank heaven, you may have a chance to escape!" exclaimed Susie. "But they will never take me on board when they know."

"About the smallpox?" said Tom. "Well, they will never know from me, that's a certain thing."

"Same here," added George. "But I'm not so sure that any of us want to go on board that ship. We'll wait first and see what sort of a crew she has, and what it is about that thing hanging down from the yardarm!"

"Oh, goodness gracious, I see!" cried Jeff. "Look, Tom, look!"

"There's more than one," said Tom. "There's one on the mainmast, and one on the fore!"

"Yes, and one on the mizzenmast, too," added George. "That means mutiny. There's been murder done on board."

From the yardarm of each mast dangled the body of a man.

As the ship drew nearer other startling discoveries were made.

The deck, which at first seemed to be deserted, now began to swarm with the Fuegian dwarfs, while at the wheel, steering, stood a tall figure, bareheaded, with an immense shock of hair.

"It's the whole push!" cried George. "The dwarfs have captured the ship, and that fellow steering is Philip Funk!"

CHAPTER XXI.

A BOLD PLAN FOR ESCAPE.

The situation of our unfortunate friends left in the land of fire had now become very grave.

The escape from their present position, without exposing themselves to the full gaze of the dwarfs on board the ship, was of course impossible, and in a few moments they would probably be with them in the cave.

Mad though Philip Funk was, he still seemed to know enough to steer the ship.

The dwarfs appeared to have more fear of him than he had of them, for it was noticeable that none of them went near him, but left him to do his steering without interference.

They meanwhile kept running all over the deck, and Jeff grew particularly incensed to see them darting in and out of the galley.

"Wisht I wuz dar!" he kept saying—which you may be very sure he didn't—"wouldn't I make 'em sick! What right dem long-haired little niggahs got mussin' wiv' my pots and pans, I'd like to know?"

"I expect they have killed every mother's son of them haymakers!" exclaimed George. "But I don't understand them fellers hanging to the yardarm. The dwarfs never did that, of course. Wish I could make them out."

He was able to do it when the ship drew a little nearer.

Then George, who had kept talking away, suddenly grew silent.

"Well, Tom, we have got our revenge!" he presently exclaimed.

"What do you mean?" demanded Tom.

"Look at the body of the man hanging from the mizzenmast. If you can't make him out, why then I can."

"By gracious, I see!" cried Tom. "It's Topham!"

"That's just who it is, and the man hanging from the mainmast is Captain Bowers as sure as a gun!"

"An' dat's no surer dan dat de feller on de foremast is one-eyed Pete, and dat's no dream, neder," Jeff exclaimed.

"It must have been mutiny before ever the dwarfs captured the ship!" cried George. "Probably that happened yesterday, which explains why they steered over to the Patagonian shore."

"Are we going to stay here till they come?" asked Susie. "I think we ought to make some move to hide ourselves. One experience with those dreadful savages is enough for me."

It was enough for George, too, and he immediately proposed retreating into the cave.

"We can do better than that," said Tom. "If we go into the cave we are liable to be caught and penned in again. I think the best thing we can do is to get further along on the beach, and hide among the rocks. There we can at least have the privilege of jumping into the sea and drowning ourselves if worse comes to worst."

It was easy to find such a hiding-place, and they managed to get into it unobserved.

(To be continued)

ITEMS OF INTEREST

BLACK OPALS.

The display of opals and precious stones is a fascinating feature of the Australian exhibit at the San Francisco fair. It includes case after case of the black opals peculiar to Australia and a discovery of the last decade.

"Concentrated sunset" some one has called them, and it really is a good description for the blues and greens and flame tints rival anything nature can boast of in the color line. They combine the Oriental sheen of the peacock and the gold of the desert sunset.

One magnificent specimen named "The California Poppy" is like a sea of living flame. There are some specimens that symbolize the storms of life, so full are they of the lights and somber shades of cloudland.

Diamonds also are a product of Australia. Sapphires, blue, white and yellow, form another array. Emeralds, rubies and garnets are also a part of the lure of the jewel cases of the commonwealth.

SOMETHING ABOUT PARAGUAY.

Paraguay is in the heart of the South American continent. Its area is 175,000 square miles. The country is divided by the Paraguay River. On the east of the river it is rolling and mountainous with ridges of 1,000 to 2,000 feet in height. On the west is the Chao, a great, low-lying plain. Taking the country generally there are vast pasturages for live stock and this promises to be the leading industry of the future, although there are other agricultural prospects. The climate is sub-tropical, but the mountain chains and the hydrographic system modify it so that the products of the temperate zone are also capable of cultivation. The extent of the forest area has not been fully determined, but it is known to contain the quebracho wood, which is so valuable to the leather industry of the world. Yerba mate, or Paraguay tea, is one of the most valuable agricultural products. Paraguay is reached by steamers from Montevideo and Buenos Ayres, up the Plata, the Parana and the Paraguay rivers. It is largely dependent on the waterways for communication.

OPIUM SMUGGLED IN PICKLED HERRING.

A new method of smuggling opium into the United States was accidentally discovered by a customs' weigher at the Atlantic Transport Company's pier, foot of West Sixteenth street, New York, the other day, when seventeen barrels labeled "Pickled Herrings" were landed from the steamship Missouri, which had arrived from London.

Pickled herrings are entitled to be brought into the country free of duty and a clerk from G. W. Sheldon & Co., customs brokers of 24 State street, was sent to the pier to clear them. When he arrived the barrels had been stacked but no papers had been received from the Custom House authorizing their release, so the clerk went downtown again to find out the cause of the delay.

During his absence the weigher started to put the barrels on the scales. He noticed that oil was leaking from one of the barrels, and when the clerk returned he pointed

this out to him, and said that herrings packed in oil were dutiable and the barrels would have to be opened.

When the first one was emptied a big, square tin was found which aroused the suspicion, and a customs inspector was sent for. The tin was opened and it was found to contain a number of small tins of opium, hermetically sealed, which were estimated to be worth \$1,000. Three other barrels were opened, but they did not contain anything but pickled herrings, and the remainder were ordered to be locked up for the night.

TELEPHONE 3,875 MILES.

Another world's record in telephony was established, when Francis L. Hine, president of the First National Bank of New York, conversed, via San Francisco, with J. M. Elliott, president of the First National Bank of Los Angeles. Mr. Hine was sitting in the directors' room of the New York Telephone Company, at 15 Dey street, while Mr. Elliott was in the building of the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company in Los Angeles.

The two bank presidents exchanged congratulations and pleasantries and then Acting Mayor George McAneny spoke with Mayor Rose of Los Angeles.

The real estate interests of the two cities then exchanged greetings, with Thomas Shalleross of the National Association of Real Estate Exchanges at this end and J. B. Mines, president of the Los Angeles Realty Board at the other. Pierre Jay of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York then talked with J. B. Miller of the California Edison Company, and after this Mr. Miller talked with Vice-President Kingsbury of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company. Major Charles Saltzman, of the Signal Corps, U. S. A., representing Major-Gen. Leonard Wood, talked with Major-Gen. Kobbe, U. S. A., retired, whose home is in Los Angeles. Major Saltzman, in talking with General Kobbe, commented on the part the army had played in building the line.

Melville E. Stone, general manager of the Associated Press, then talked with E. T. Earle, publisher of the Los Angeles Tribune. Mr. Earle said that talking over such a great distance seemed uncanny, and commented on the great clearness of the sound.

New York and San Francisco were connected by direct wire on Jan. 25, and the mayors of the chief coast cities of the United States exchanged greetings. The voices traveled 3,875 miles, or about 400 miles further than in the conversation between New York and San Francisco. The words went direct, passing through relay stations at Pittsburgh, Chicago, Omaha, Denver, Salt Lake City and San Francisco.

The New York-Los Angeles wire is open for commercial purposes, and conversations can now be carried on at a rate of \$22.20 for three minutes and \$7.10 for each additional three minutes. While the line is in use more than \$2,000,000 worth of apparatus is held up. It is expected that it will take about ten minutes to "open a talk through."

THE ROB ROYS

—OR—

BOLD BOB, THE CAPTAIN OF THE TEAM

By DICK ELLISON

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER IX (continued)

"I'll teach that jade a lesson one of these days that she'll not be apt to forget very soon," he muttered between his set teeth. "The idea of snubbing me for those cads. Blame them all, I don't know which I hate the worst, the fellows or the girls. How dare they insult me? Why, I can buy and sell the whole lot of them, and yet they dare treat me like a dog. Go ahead, my fine birds, and we'll see who comes out ahead."

"We just passed your friend, Mr. Selden," Barbara said with a soft little laugh. "And he seemed to be in a hurry."

"He is wise to be in a hurry when he meets me," Bob answered, grimly. "For if I get the chance, I'll make him see stars."

"I hardly think he will give you the chance, for he is about as big a coward as I ever met in all my life," Sidney said, her eyes flashing, "and if he ever again annoys me in any way, I will give him a taste of my whip."

"Good for you, Miss Sidney," Murray Roberts exclaimed. "Good for you. I would like to see you give the wretch a good thrashing, for he's the most contemptible specimen of humanity that I ever met."

"And now let's change the subject to one that will be more agreeable," Sidney remarked. "For whenever I speak of Henry Selden, it makes me sick. How about the ball game? When will the second contest take place?"

"One week from to-day," Roberts answered promptly, "and you can rest assured, Miss Sidney, that the victory will be ours. The Rob Roys are like the gallant outlaws they are named after—they are never conquered."

"And we will be there also wearing your colors," Barbara broke in gayly. "That alone should give you new courage and strength."

"And so it will, Miss Barbara," Murray Roberts said in a low voice, adding in a whisper: "There is one at least who will be like a man inspired, and I hardly think it is necessary that I give you his name."

"Henry Selden perhaps," Barbara replied with a mischievous laugh. "I have no doubt but what you mean him. But we must be going. We are late for supper, and so are you. Good night, and may the Rob Roys come out victorious. Of course they will, but sometimes good wishes act as a mascot."

Then, touching her restless pony lightly with her riding whip, the happy girl cantered past them, Sidney following her. The iron shod hoofs of the ponies rang out

upon the crisp night air, and a merry burst of girlish laughter floated back to the two youths who stood watching the fair riders until they vanished from sight in the dusky shadows. Then they trudged on toward the college, each one busy with his own thoughts.

At last the day set for the second contest between the Rob Roys and the Orangemen rolled around, and the grandstand was packed at an early hour. There was a larger crowd present than there had been at the first game, and when the favorite team ran into the ring, a mighty cheer greeted them. The terrible ending of the first contest which had been so nearly a tragedy served to throw a halo of romance about Bold Bob, and it seemed as if all the men and women present had suddenly gone mad over the appearance of their favorite.

Then the Orangemen entered, and while they were greeted rapturously, they did not receive the same welcome that the Rob Roys did. The captain of the latter set his teeth tightly together, vowing to himself that he would win or die; and Henry Selden, looking at him, took an oath that he would defeat him in some way whether fair or foul.

CHAPTER X.

VICTORY FOR THE ROB ROYS.

The rival teams formed in line, and the mass of humanity in the grandstand all arose, breathless and excited. Not a word was spoken as the line of black and yellow and the line of gay plaid closed for an instant.

The two colors presented a strange appearance as they surged back and forth, a sea of brilliant hues.

Every one present realized that it was to be a grim and desperate battle, and they were interested from the start.

Once Bold Bob raised his eyes up to the grandstand, and sought a brief, fleeting glimpse of Sidney Worth and Barbara Voss. Both girls smiled and waved their hands to him, and then from the fair hand of Sidney there dropped a wreath of purple heather.

It was a strange occurrence, but it fell directly over the handsome head of the captain of the Rob Roys. It was a pretty sight, and a loud cheer went up from the throng who had witnessed it. And Sidney, half frightened at what she had done, drew back, her cheeks scarlet.

But that one-act had given the young captain new strength, new courage, as it were, and he played with renewed force. His heart was throbbing thick and fast; his cheeks burned like fire when he went back to his post.

Henry Selden did not dare attempt any treachery this time. He saw how popular Robert MacGregor was, and he also knew that the finger of suspicion pointed toward him, and he was wise enough to keep quiet, though it was only for the time. He made up his mind, however, to get even with his rival later on.

"Let him triumph over me now, the penniless puppy," he muttered, as he saw how hopeless a chance his team stood of winning the game. "Let him triumph over me now, but my time will come, and soon, too. I'll put up a job on him that will ruin his whole life, and I'll carry it through, too. Once I make up my mind to do a thing I never fail. If it costs me five thousand dollars, I'll ruin Mr. Robert MacGregor's life."

And Bold Bob, looking into the sullen face of his rival, knew there was hatred and bitter jealousy burning within his breast.

"I'll keep my eyes open for you, my sly friend," he said, and his eyes glowed. "You won't get a chance to do me up this time, for I am as sure that you hired one of your dupes to shoot me as I am sure there is day and night. But try it once more and see how well you fare."

The game went on. The spectators were wild with delight, and when they realized that the Rob Roys had gained a point they cheered themselves hoarse. The friends and followers of the Orangemen cheered them, too, but not as the mass did the favorite team.

The final test was reached. A breathless silence reigned for a few moments, and then, with one grand sweep, the Rob Roys won. Men and women stood up in the grandstand, wildly waving hats and handkerchiefs, they shouted themselves hoarse, and in the midst of the general excitement the team seized their captain, and, lifting him up on their shoulders, bore him triumphantly around the field.

"Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!" they shouted. "Bold Bob forever, the Rob Roys forever! What team can beat them? Rah, rah, rah!"

"For heaven's sake, boys, let me down and don't make a show of me!" our hero begged. "I'm not a monkey or dancing bear on exhibition. Let me down, I say!"

"Hurrah for Bold Bob!" the mass in the grandstand shouted. "Bold Bob, the gallant captain of the Rob Roys!"

"A speech!" some one in the crowd suddenly called out. "A speech from Bold Bob!"

Then a hundred different voices took it up.

"Yes, yes; we want a speech!" they cried, eagerly. "A speech from the captain! We must have it!"

"Speech! Speech! Speech!" was repeated all over the grandstand, and at last in despair Robert held up his hand to give them to understand he would speak.

Instantly all was silence, and still borne upon the shoulders of his comrades, the young man attempted to make the first public speech of his life.

"I cannot tell you in words how your kind reception and evident appreciation of our efforts of to-day has en-

couraged us. While we know we have honestly won the victory, yet at the same time we realize that our rivals also deserve great credit for the gallant fight they made, and when we meet again upon these same grounds, I hope then to see the same kindly faces that I see here to-day. I thank you one and all for your encouragement and kindness, and feel safe in saying that the Rob Roys have no fear of ever being conquered."

A mad, hoarse cheer greeted him, and then the team bore him away while the crowd slowly dispersed. The victory had been a grand one, and Henry Selden had murder in his heart when he saw how popular his rival really was. He could have murdered him with his own hands, and enjoyed the task.

Half an hour later and the field was cleared of every soul. No one would have dreamed that it had been the scene of so much excitement only an hour before.

In honor of the Rob Roys' victory, Professor Romaine was to give a grand reception at Fairview that evening, to which all the youths and maidens of the neighborhood were invited. Of course the rival team was also invited, and they were to be present.

The handsome young captain looked handsomer than ever when he had donned his evening suit, at least so thought Sidney Worth as she advanced to meet him, her lovely flower-like face set off by the dainty rose-pink gown she wore. Her hand trembled slightly as it touched his, and her soft cheeks flushed hotly.

"I want to congratulate you, Mr. MacGregor," she said, softly. "I am so glad that the Rob Roys won!"

"I told you in the beginning that they were sure to win," he answered, his eyes resting in open admiration upon her sweet face. "I knew they could not be beaten, and I never say a thing unless I can prove it, Miss Sidney."

"You were right that time," she said in a low voice.

"And one reason why we won was because of that beautiful wreath of purple heather you threw me," he went on, bending his handsome, graceful head a trifle lower. "The sweetness of the flowers reminded me of the fair giver, and I shall always keep it. I would not part with it for all the wealth in the world."

She was about to answer, when Barbara came leaning on the arm of Murray Roberts.

"You gave it to them that time sure enough, Mr. MacGregor," the merry, light-hearted girl said gayly. "and I was so pleased over the result that I split my gloves cheering you."

"I hope you will allow me the pleasure of replacing them, Miss Barbara," Murray Roberts remarked, with a low bow. "For it would afford me the greatest delight."

"I never refuse gloves, Mr. Roberts," she retorted, "and mind you, I always wear good ones."

"I wonder if you were as enthusiastic as your friend was, Miss Sidney?" Roberts asked politely.

"I was as glad to see the Rob Roys win, but at the same time my gloves did not suffer," Sidney replied. "Perhaps they were made of stronger material, though."

(To be continued)

TIMELY TOPICS

Fishing near Fernandina, Fla., in the Gulf of Mexico, Ernest Heg, proprietor of Magner, Winslow & Co., provision dealers, Chicago, hooked and, after five hours' struggle, landed a huge mossback turtle weighing eighty-five pounds and estimated to be 600 years old. The turtle will be presented to the Lincoln Park Zoo.

The Rev. Albert Vogel, ninety-eight, walked into Carrick, Pa., from the home of a friend, two miles' distant, and preached the evening sermon to a congregation in the Carrick Methodist Episcopal Church recently. "Grandpa" Vogel was born in Germany, but came to the United States in his early youth. He entered the ministry in his twenty-third year and has preached almost continuously ever since. He has been on the superannuated list several years.

The other afternoon Premier Sir Edward Morris, of St. John's, N. F., witnessed a demonstration of a material invented by Michael Comerford, which is said completely to obscure any object to which it is applied. Sir Edward Morris states that an object which was completely visible to him at 500 yards before the material was applied was absolutely invisible at thirty yards. Gov. Davidson and naval and military officials will witness a demonstration, after which the invention will be examined by the British authorities.

A painting by David Teniers, which is supposed to be the famous missing "Smugglers" and three centuries old, is owned by the Rev. Dr. N. O. Hellier, a Presbyterian pastor of Lisbon, N. Dak. Teniers was a celebrated Flemish painter of the seventeenth century, his most famous works being the "Smoker," the "Card Players" and "Smugglers." The last-named was lost years ago. Dr. Hellier was a student in Scotland twenty years ago and was given a tip that the famous painting was in a farmhouse. He investigated and became convinced of the authenticity of the painting and purchased it. He took it to Chicago, where it was inspected by Arthur Dawson, the well-known Teniers expert, who pronounced it genuine.

From odds and ends of scrap material available for his use, an Ohio farmer boy has constructed a monoplane glider attached to a bicycle, which fills quite adequately the purpose for which it is intended, says Popular Mechanics. To cover the framework of the wings, which are made principally of laths, its builder made use of pieces of canvas that had been used over tobacco plant beds. The bracing wires were taken from an old fence, and a few other members were likewise reclaimed from scraps. By pedaling the bicycle rapidly part of the way down one side of a knoll, the rider is able to gain sufficient momentum for the glider to take to the air when its nose is pointed upward. By means of wires extending from the handle bar to the outer tips of the plane, the wings are warped and the craft guided.

Despite the reticence of officials of the Midvale Steel Works, Philadelphia, it became known recently that the plant had received a contract from the United States Government to make 18,000 fourteen-inch shells. The order, one of the largest awarded by the Government since the Spanish war, is the first of importance to be placed since the beginning of the European war, and caused much discussion in army and navy circles. The shells, it was pointed out, are mainly for use in the forts about New York harbor and the Panama Canal. The Government officials, in placing such a big order, have made provision for the Pennsylvania and other big battleships that will be placed in commission during the coming year. Details concerning the contract, including time of delivery, could not be obtained.

Testimony that a box containing about forty live, squirming, twisting, wriggling snakes was placed in the sitting-room of the home of Mrs. Grace George by a sister of her husband, Pern George, now said to be in Chicago, obtained a divorce for her in the Superior Court, Indianapolis. Mrs. George alleged her husband was guilty of cruel treatment. Mrs. George in her testimony did not mention the snakes, but her mother did not hesitate to tell about them. Her son-in-law, she said, told her that his sister had arrived at his house to spend the winter, accompanied by her pet snakes. There were about forty of the reptiles. Judge Clifford said that snakes might constitute an element of cruelty if kept about the house and he thought that with the other testimony to the effect that George had struck his wife and had a habit of breaking the dishes constituted sufficient grounds for a divorce.

A report of the results of compulsory temperance, as introduced into Russia since the beginning of the war, has been prepared by Professor A. L. Mendelson of the Russian Society for the Preservation of the National Health. In the opinion of Professor Mendelson, the beneficial results of compulsory temperance are not open to doubt. In proof of his contention he cites the reduction of alcoholic sickness in Petrograd and of the attendance at anti-alcoholic sanatoriums, the decline in the number of cases of dipsomania and alcoholic insanity, and also of general mental affections. He notes also a reduction of indirect manifestations of alcoholic sickness, of traumatic injuries and suicides. For example, from July to December there were in 1913 ninety-seven suicides, while in 1914 the total was reduced to fourteen. Other results of temperance, says the professor, were an increase in savings bank deposits and a reduction in the number of small loans made by the pawn shops. For the first two months of 1915 the savings banks of Petrograd received deposits exceeding the figures of the corresponding months a year ago by 1,500,000 rubles, while throughout Russia the deposits increased by 190,000,000 rubles.

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GOOD CURRENT NEWS ARTICLES

A large increase in the sale of Bibles during the past year was reported at the annual meeting of the American Bible Society. The report shows an increase of over a million, in spite of the fact that large parts of the earth were cut off from communication because of war. The society announced its intention of establishing a Bible distribution point at Panama within the coming year.

Five Japanese gardeners employed at the University of California have been replaced by white men in pursuance of a university policy, Ralph P. Merritt, comptroller of the board of regents, said. White labor, he said, would be used wherever possible. "The ranch is an American institution." Mr. Merritt explained: "It has seemed proper to make it an ideal ranch for white families. Japanese labor has been employed temporarily in some positions, but only until white persons of desirable characters were found to take their places."

One of the last stands in Essex County, N. J., against the annual invasion of the mosquito is being made at this place, where an army of exterminators has been digging trenches. With sod saw, brush knives and specially made spades the workers are clearing and draining swampy lands. The workers, who are under the direction of the Essex County Mosquito Extermination Commission, say they will eventually prevent all breeding hereabout. Similar work has been under way in the White Oak Ridge section of Millburn. At the latter place are many pools which are being sprayed with oil.

If there is a heaven for cats, old Tom Rittenhouse, who died last year, ought to be happy there, because all his little rich friends of Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, where he lived and died, keep a watchful eye over his grave. To-day it is the brightest spot in this square, frequented by the children of the wealthy. Tulips outline the mound that marks the resting place of Tom, who adopted the square in his youth and lived there for twenty-eight years. Atop the grave are pink and white hyacinths, and more hyacinths, while rose bushes grow in the corners of the little inclosure surrounding the mound. The grave bears granite head and foot stones.

An ingenious method, known as "firing on the clock," is much used in the European war for enabling a military officer to concentrate the fire of his command on any particular point. This method consists simply in designating the object to be fired at by its position with reference to an imaginary clock face covering the landscape. The point that forms the center of this imaginary clock must first be understood all around, and a line passing upward and back from this point is, of course, the 12 o'clock line. Then, when a command comes down the line to direct the fire at "white house, 10 o'clock," for example, or at "road, 9 o'clock," the rifleman or artilleryman knows definitely which particular white house or road is meant, and is able to direct his fire with the assurance that he is obeying orders.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES

Country Doctor—Waal, Silas, yer wife has gastric fever. Silas Hayrick—Don't see haow that kin be. We've never burned gas—always used lamps.

Bob—Gosh, Rob, where'd you rake up those seedy old shoes? Rob—Why, man, those are my patent leathers. Bob—But the patent has expired, eh?

"Did you have any luck when you went to complain about the gas bill?" "Better luck than last month," answered Mr. Meekton. "The man didn't laugh this time."

"You say you take automobile rides for the sake of exercise?" "Certainly." "But where does the physical exercise come in?" "Getting out to see what the matter is."

"I am afraid the nobleman who is to become your son-in-law has not much talent for business." "I don't know," answered Mr. Mumrox. "If he can manage to get as good prices for other merchandise as he does for a title, I'll trust him to take his chances in business."

"Why is Uglinus so proud of his homeliness?" "Not proud—just grateful to it." "But why grateful?" "He owes his life to it." "Yes?" "One time he stared Death in the face, and as soon as Death had a good look at him the old rascal with the reaphook turned and beat it."

Beggar—Kind sir, could you help a brother Mason, Odd Fellow, Elk, Moose, Eagle, Owl or Forester? Passerby—I belong to none of them. Beggar—Ah, den, could you help a fellow Methodist, Baptist, Catholic, Episcopal or Presbyterian? Passerby—I belong to none of them. Beggar—Ah, den, shake hands and assist a feller Socialist and uplifter in distress.

Mrs. Brady—Och, Missus O'Toole, ye're worrukin' noight an' day. Mrs. O'Toole—Yis, O'm under bonds to kape the pace fer pullin' the hair o' that blaggard, Missus Murphy, an' the magistrate told me that if O crossed me again he'd foine me tin shillings. Mrs. Brady—An' ye worrukin' hard so's to kape outer mischeef? Mrs. O'Toole (between her teeth)—No, O'm saving up to pay the fine.

AN ADVENTURE ON MOUNT VESUVIUS.

By Alexander Armstrong

It was in the fall of 1868, and I was making a tour of Italy with a friend by the name of Stevenson.

My friend was an Englishman, an original "Johnny Bull," being short and thickset in frame, and ruddy in countenance, and as was customary with the cockney, omitted his "H."

He was, however, a very genial and interesting traveling companion, being very talkative, and we had soon struck up a strong friendship.

We had reached Naples, and, of course, in common with all foreigners, wished to climb the crater of Vesuvius, and view its turbulent interior.

Accordingly we intimated to our hotel porter that we wished a guide, which was quite sufficient, for before an hour a small army of ragged, shoeless, ill-looking mendicants applied at the front entrance, each striving to outdo the rest in eulogy upon his prowess as a mountain guide.

We made our selection at haphazard, striking upon a low-browed, villainous-looking Neapolitan. We did not like his looks much, but, for want of better material, were obliged to accept him.

It was noon when we started, and the fellow (Giovanni he gave his name) affirmed we should be enabled to view the crater and get back to Naples again before sunset.

Although I was extremely doubtful of this, I said nothing. As for Stevenson, it was his wont to reply upon me for judgment, and subsequently he did not demur.

We had selected such effects as we thought proper to take with us, and were upon the point of starting, when one of the hotel guests, apparently a Parisian by his dress and language, and with whom both Stevenson and myself were fairly acquainted, rushed out into the yard.

"Pardon, monsieurs," he said, doffing his hat respectfully, "but may I ask the pleasure of accompanying you to-day?"

I looked at Stevenson.

But his face was an enigmatical one.

I hesitated.

"You had better take me into your party, monsieur," said Monsieur Valarsay—that was his name—with a deprecatory wave of his hand.

"It vill make your forces ze strongare, if ze brigands attack you," and he laughed in a perfect French manner.

"Very good, Monsieur Valarsay," said I, impelled by some unaccountable motive. "It will give us much pleasure."

The Parisian bowed low and smiled until he showed his ~~teeth~~ teeth below his black mustache. Then he turned and vanished in the hotel.

When he came out he carried a knapsack upon his back, and in place of the usual staff, a repeating rifle.

"Do you expect to find game upon the summit, Monsieur Valarsay?" I queried.

He laughed and made an evasive answer.

We proceeded in a carriage a good portion of the way,

until we reached the base of the crater. From there up it would be necessary for us to proceed on foot.

Instructing the driver to await our return, we alighted from the lumbering coach and prepared for the ascent. Above us loomed a steep ascent of conglomerated masses of rock and lava, above which the blue wreaths of smoke were curling upward from the bowels of the earth.

"Now for the crater," I cried, taking the lead in the ascent. "Who shall reach it first?"

But before I had taken three steps, Stevenson clutched me by the shoulder.

"Look!" he cried, pointing upward.

I glanced in the direction indicated, and caught the flutter of a woman's shawl far up among the lava blocks. Evidently another party were making the ascent.

It was a toilsome climb, and when at length we reached the summit we were much exhausted, and seated ourselves to rest upon a pile of lava fragments, in a position from which we could watch the sulphurous pit of smoke and fire and molten lava yawning at our feet.

At length I had realized one of the greatest aspirations of my life. I had climbed Vesuvius, and stood upon the verge of that crater, from which centuries before the fearful eruption had come which had buried beneath its ashes and lava the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii.

While reviewing those old legends of the past connected with Vesuvius, in my mind, I had arisen and advanced toward the crater's edge, obvious of the surroundings.

So enwrapped in reverie had I become that I was much startled when the Parisian, Monsieur Valarsay, advanced and slapped me quite forcibly upon the shoulder.

"Pardon, Monsieur American," said the polite Frenchman, with an extravagant bow. "But are we not in danger of being overtaken by ze storm?"

Surprised, I raised my head, and now perceived for the first time that the sky was heavily overcast, and that scattered drops of rain were falling.

And as though influenced by the oncoming war of the elements, the seething pit at our feet now began to boil higher than ever.

I looked in apprehension for Giovanni, the guide. A moment before Monsieur Valarsay swore he had seen him sitting upon a block of lava. Now he had gone.

It was a most appalling realization which dawned upon us. Was the guide a traitor? Had we been led cunningly into a trap by him, to be robbed by the roving brigands which it was known infested the region?

At this critical moment Stevenson, who was ever the laconic one, uttered an exclamation at my shoulder.

I turned, and as I did so a shrill feminine shriek went up in the air, and I saw a white, fluttering dress and red shawl disappear over the crater's edge, not a hundred yards from where we stood.

It was the female we had seen far above us when commencing the ascent.

Without pausing to consider the consequences, and with but the one realization in view, that the unknown female was in distress, I bounded toward the spot.

"Goodness!" I cried, "she is lost. She will never emerge alive."

Her companions, a couple of Italian guides, an elderly

English lady and a white-haired gentleman, presumably the father and mother, were in paroxysms of grief.

At the same moment, I perceived a way of rescue. The shelf upon which she was, not more than twenty feet above the boiling sea of lava, extended some distance along the rocky wall, until it finally came to a jagged surface, which it was not difficult to scale.

In a moment I had ran along the verge until I had reached this point, then dropping easily down upon the shelf, had traversed it in a moment's time, and just as the unfortunate young girl was upon the point of succumbing from exhaustion to a fearful fate, I grasped her about the waist, and hung for a moment in a precarious position above the seething contents of the crater.

And as I hung over the depths, a sudden warning cry reached my ears. I felt the precarious shelf crumble beneath my feet, and——”

With an almost superhuman effort I sprang back just in season, regained my footing, and clung to the wall desperately. I did not waste more time, but edged my way along, until I reached a point from whence the Parisian Valarsay could grasp my burden, which he did, and a moment later I stood upon terra firma, just as the storm broke, and a gust of rain drenched all in the party thoroughly.

Then a general introduction followed. Lord Southwick was the name of the elderly gentleman. They were stopping during the season in Naples, and had started forth, as ourselves, to visit the crater.

Lady Southwick and her daughter Evelyn were most profuse in their gratitude toward me for my service, which I acknowledged in as unobtrusive a manner as possible, being a modest, quiet sort of man myself.

The Southwicks' guides had not proved treacherous, and we at once set forth upon the descent. The rain was falling rapidly, and I produced wraps from my portmanteau which I placed about the delicate shoulders of Evelyn Southwick.

I took charge of the young lady and followed the guides, Lord and Lady Southwick being back of us, while Valarsay and Stevenson brought up the rear.

Halfway down, the rain falling faster, Evelyn and myself separated from the others, and chanced to see a large oak tree, beneath the spreading branches of which a couple of Italian peasant women had sought refuge.

Beneath it we awaited the abating of the storm, when we continued our journey, and a short while later, just as the hurricane had ceased, and the shades of evening were quickly settling, we reached the carriage, where the anxious father and mother awaited us.

But our adventures for the day were by no means over.

I noticed that Valarsay had been unusually silent as the carriage rumbled on, and he fingered his rifle nervously.

“Friends,” he at length spoke, so suddenly as to startle us, “do not allow yourselves to get frightened if the coach presently comes to a stop.”

No sooner had the words left his lips than a sudden cry of alarm went up from the driver, and the coach did stop, while at the window appeared a rough, uncouth-looking individual.

He was a villainous-featured man, an Italian, clad in brigandish costume, and carried a short carbine.

We had been waylaid by brigands.

And upon the rocky roadway in the fast-increasing darkness, we were obliged to get out of the coach one by one and surrender our valuables:

I had quite a sum of money, some four hundred francs, with me, as also did Stevenson. Lady Southwick was also obliged to sacrifice her watch and diamonds.

Valarsay also yielded up his purse, but I noticed that all the while he kept a keen scrutiny upon the bandit.

The brigands were five in number, evil-looking fellows, and one among them I thought I recognized as our treacherous guide.

There was no help for it, however; the odds were too great, and Valarsay did not seem disposed to use his rifle. So we gave up our valuables and re-entered our carriage, and the driver whipped his horses up again.

The villainous robber chief made a low bow with a sardonic smile as we dashed off, and a short while later struck the highway to Naples.

The Parisian clutched my sleeve, and seemed about to speak, but checked himself.

When at length we drew off in the hotel yard he drew me aside, and in a changed tone of voice spoke:

“You do not know me?”

“You are Monsieur Valarsay.”

“No, signor Americano, I am not a Parisian as you have believed,” he continued. “I am not Monsieur Valarsay. I am a Swiss detective. It is my business to trace out these brigands. My name (betray it not) is Jacques Marechal. Before to-morrow night your valuables shall be restored to you.”

“But,” I queried in astonishment, “why did you not take advantage of your man? You had him in your power. You could easily have shot him with your rifle.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Jacques Marechal, crossing himself devoutly. “Heaven forbids my taking a human life unnecessarily. No. I had a surer way.”

“How? You may never see him again.”

“Yes, I shall,” said the detective in a decided tone.

“How?”

“Easy enough. You see these brigands are all residents of Naples. They ply their vocation there daytimes, and many of them live in the city. Now, there is one man who is thought to be a respectable citizen whom I have had under suspicion a great while. I have long endeavored to discover his identity. To-night I have solved the mystery.”

“In what manner?”

“This brigand chief and the suspected party are one and the same. In half an hour I shall lay hands upon the bird.”

When I related my interview with the great Swiss detective to Stevenson, he was truly surprised.

“A detective!” he exclaimed. “I could swear he was a rattle-headed Parisian.”

But it transpired that Jacques Marechal had told the truth.

For upon the following day, in accordance with his promise, he returned my four hundred francs intact, also Stevenson's money.

NEWS OF THE DAY

Fire has destroyed the old Mormon Bank, a landmark built by Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon religion, when he decided to make Kirtland, Ohio, the headquarters for his sect.

A new idea in cigarmaking is to cut off the tips of the cigars and insert in them a pin about two inches long and closely resembling the tip which was removed. Being of the same color as the cigar, the pin detracts in no way from its appearance—in fact, you would never notice it unless you looked very closely. When you want to smoke one of these cigars you simply pull out this pin. You don't have to bite or cut off the end, and the tobacco is always sure to smoke evenly and draw well.

The T. A. Gillespie Company of New York will begin preparations for the erection of a large powder mill near the Charles S. Edgar property near Metuchen, N. J. The company has contracts, it is said, for ammunition and other war material from the allies. The site of the Gillespie plant is on the Raritan River opposite Lewis E. Nixon's guncotton plant now under construction. The E. I. du Pont-De Nemours smokeless powder plant is near both the Nixon and Gillespie plants. It is said that 4,000 men will be employed in the three plants.

A. Sninanoff, an Armenian of San Francisco, living in Los Angeles for some years, sailed for Seattle recently on the Governor, where he is to join a number of others and take ship for Vladivostock, from where the party will proceed to the front. Sninanoff's friends, practically the entire local Armenian colony, were on hand to bid him good-by. Sninanoff kissed all his bearded compatriots again and again, boarded the steamer, and as the grief of parting overwhelmed him, rushed down the gangplank and kissed them all again. Four times he rushed down the gangplank to implant anew the good-by kiss, much to the entertainment of the lookers-on.

A dispatch from Tarnow says the Austrians used a new howitzer with terrible effect in their successful attack upon that city. This new weapon, which is of the same caliber as the 42-centimeter gun, projects a shell nearly six feet long and its zone of execution is so great that casings were found a mile distant from the point of contact. When it strikes the ground the shell tears a hole fifty feet in diameter and in some cases twenty feet deep. There was evidence that the air pressure of this projectile was deadly, as many Russians were found dead without a wound on their bodies. It requires an entire railroad train to transport one of the new guns with its accessories.

Japan's shell-button manufacturers, having lost their best customer, Germany, on account of the war, have been in serious difficulties, but recently buttons began to be exported to England, America and Russia, and about 80 per cent. of the former business has been regained. The

serious difficulties experienced for several months have gravely affected the financial position of many manufacturers, and, taking advantage of this, buyers are cutting down prices, so that the manufacturers are still complaining, notwithstanding the revival of business. Orders have been received from Russia for shell-buttons for the army to the value of \$50,000, but this has not relieved the industry, as the price is low.

Applications for naturalization papers by Germans have increased in Chicago fivefold in one court and doubled in another since the sinking of the Lusitania. Morris Marx, chief naturalization clerk of the Superior Court, after making a comparison of figures recently, announced that the number of applications for first papers has been greatly increased. He declared that where two Germans formerly appeared for final papers among each hundred applicants ten or twelve of that nationality now seek citizenship. He divided the various nationalities as they are applying now as follows: Russians, Poles, Austrians and Britons, 60 per cent.; Germans, 33 per cent.; scattered, 7 per cent. In the Circuit Court the gains are similar.

A New England surgeon has devised an ingenious means of locating needles or other pieces of steel which have become buried in the flesh. First the buried needle is magnetized by passing a magnet over the part of the body where it is suspected to be. Then another needle, suspended from a fine silk thread, is passed over the same locality. The poles of the buried needle will attract the like poles of the surgeon's needle, causing the latter to swing around parallel to the axis of the buried needle, and if one pair of poles is nearer than the other, there will be a corresponding dip of the examining needle, somewhat like the way a "divining rod" behaves. By this means the buried needle may be located with great accuracy. This provides a far simpler and readier means of locating a buried piece of steel than the use of X-Rays.

Double guards have been assigned to patrol the United States Armory grounds in Springfield, Mass., as a result of the feeling aroused by the Lusitania sinking. The Federal street entrance to the grounds, formerly kept open until 11:30 p. m., has been ordered closed promptly at 6:30 each night. In addition the State street entrance is closed at 6:30 to every one who cannot display a pass. The armory grounds have been used for years as a "short cut" by the people of the "hill section" of the city; now they must go around. Patrols have been set to work testing the miles of iron pickets surrounding the grounds to make sure that none of them is loose enough to permit the passage of an intruder. Additional guards have been stationed at both entrances. Colonel William S. Pierce, the commandant, says the orders for additional precautions have come straight from headquarters. He believes trouble is feared principally from some "crank."

INTERESTING ARTICLES

GIRL DRIVES FIRST SPIKE OF RAILROAD.

Work on the construction of the first section of the Government's Alaska railroad has been begun at Ship Creek, according to word received at Seward, Alaska. The first spike was driven by Martha White, the first white child born on Cook Inlet.

Notice was posted at Ship Creek announcing that the Engineering Commission would not employ a large number of men this summer, and that those going to Ship Creek with the idea of finding employment would be disappointed. Squatters who staked claims on the terminal track have withdrawn from the land. Some of them, however, delayed removing their tents and lost them when newcomers, bound over the trail for Ship Creek, read notices ordering the immediate removal of the tents and carried them away.

OKLAHOMA'S WHEAT CROP.

Between 16,000 and 18,000 men will be needed to harvest Oklahoma's monster wheat crop during the coming harvest season, according to a statement issued by State Labor Commissioner W. G. Ashton, who has just completed organization work in what is believed to be the most complete and thorough system ever attempted in this or any other State for the distribution of labor during the harvest period. None but English-speaking people are encouraged to come to the State seeking employment in the harvest fields by the Labor Department. A year ago a number of foreigners landed in different parts of the State looking for work, and the fact that they could not speak English made their handling by Labor Department officials such a task that they do not care to tackle it again this year. Mr. Ashton said: "We will need between 16,000 and 18,000 harvest hands this year. The wages will range from \$2 to \$3 per day, and we want all white English-speaking people. Any foreigners who do not speak English will find it difficult to secure employment, except that we have a few settlements of Bohemians and probably some other nationalities, where we might handle some of their fellow-countrymen."

THINGS NEEDED.

Here are a few simple things so badly needed that the Scientific American calls upon inventors to get busy and invent them:

A compartment cigar case to put in the pocket, whose unfilled compartment or compartments may be collapsed without impairing the protection offered to the cigar or cigars contained in the filled compartment.

A ticket holder for holding the price and lot tickets to a coat or other garment, which ticket can be easily applied and removed and another inserted, all without mutilation or other injury to the garment.

The lower berth in a sleeping car is stuffy with the windows closed, and if you open the window the cold air is directly on you. It is thought that the riding public would appreciate some deflector or diffusing construction

which could be applied to the open window over the usual short-hinged screen and permit the entry of fresh air, at the same time preventing it from blowing directly on the passenger in the berth.

Some means for effectively preventing the mirror effect in show windows, the effect we all notice in passing such a window in which our image is reflected and the contents of the window are shut out of view. Naturally, the shopkeeper who works for a display in his window resents it not being seen.

President Wilson, who is an ardent golfer and also dependent on his eyeglasses, is reported as saying that he cannot play the game in the rain because of the accumulation of moisture on his glasses, which leads to the suggestion that specially devised glasses or some treatment of the ordinary lens may solve the problem.

THE POSTAGE STAMP YARN.

There are certain stock war stories which persist in cropping up in new forms at regular intervals which win a hearing among some classes of people who believe everything that is printed to the discredit of England's enemies, says the Stamp Journal.

One of these stories is the postage stamp yarn. In this the writer, a British subject, detained in Germany, writes a rosy letter to a friend in England, tells how happy he is in the camp and calls his friend's attention to the curious postage stamp affixed to the letter.

The friend soaks off the stamp and finds written in a minute hand underneath: "Don't believe a word of what I have written—it is all lies."

Another version is the following, taken from the March issue of the Boston Philatelist:

"We are starving." That was the substance of a sentence written underneath the postage stamp of a letter received in this city (Lynn, Mass.) from the wife of a German physician, residing in the interior of that country.

The three words written in ink in very small letters under the stamp revealed a tragic state of affairs existing in the German interior. The recipient of the letter was a Lynn woman of German descent, whose name is withheld at her request.

The letter, which was a lengthy one, lauded the Germans very highly on their victory, and contained words of praise for the Kaiser. It referred to the happiness and content of the Germans.

The concluding sentence read: "You had better save this stamp, for I do not know when you will see another." The Lynn woman was puzzled, and did not know what was meant by the sentence, after a letter which appeared so full of cheer and hopefulness.

Then she decided to steam the stamp from the envelope, and beneath she found the message, which in three words revealed the existing state of affairs in Germany. The message had been written under the stamp to avoid the close censorship that is maintained in Germany over all mails.

PICK-ME-OUT PUZZLE.



The head is finished in black japan, and in the mouth is a highly polished steel ball. The puzzle is to pick out the ball. Price, 10c.; 3 for 25c. by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO.,
29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

IMITATION CIGAR BUTT.

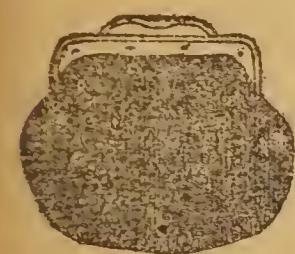
It is made of a composition, exactly resembling a lighted cigar. The white ashes at the end and the imitation of tobacco-leaf being perfect. You can carelessly place it on top of the tablecloth or any other expensive piece of furniture, and await the result. After they see the joke everybody will have a good laugh. Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid; 3 for 25c.
C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.



STAR AND CRESCENT PUZZLE.

The puzzle is to separate the one star from the linked star and crescent without using force. Price by mail, postpaid 10c.; 3 for 25c.

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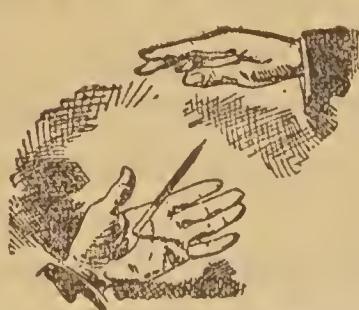
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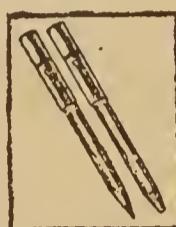
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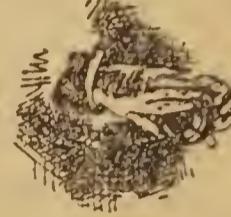
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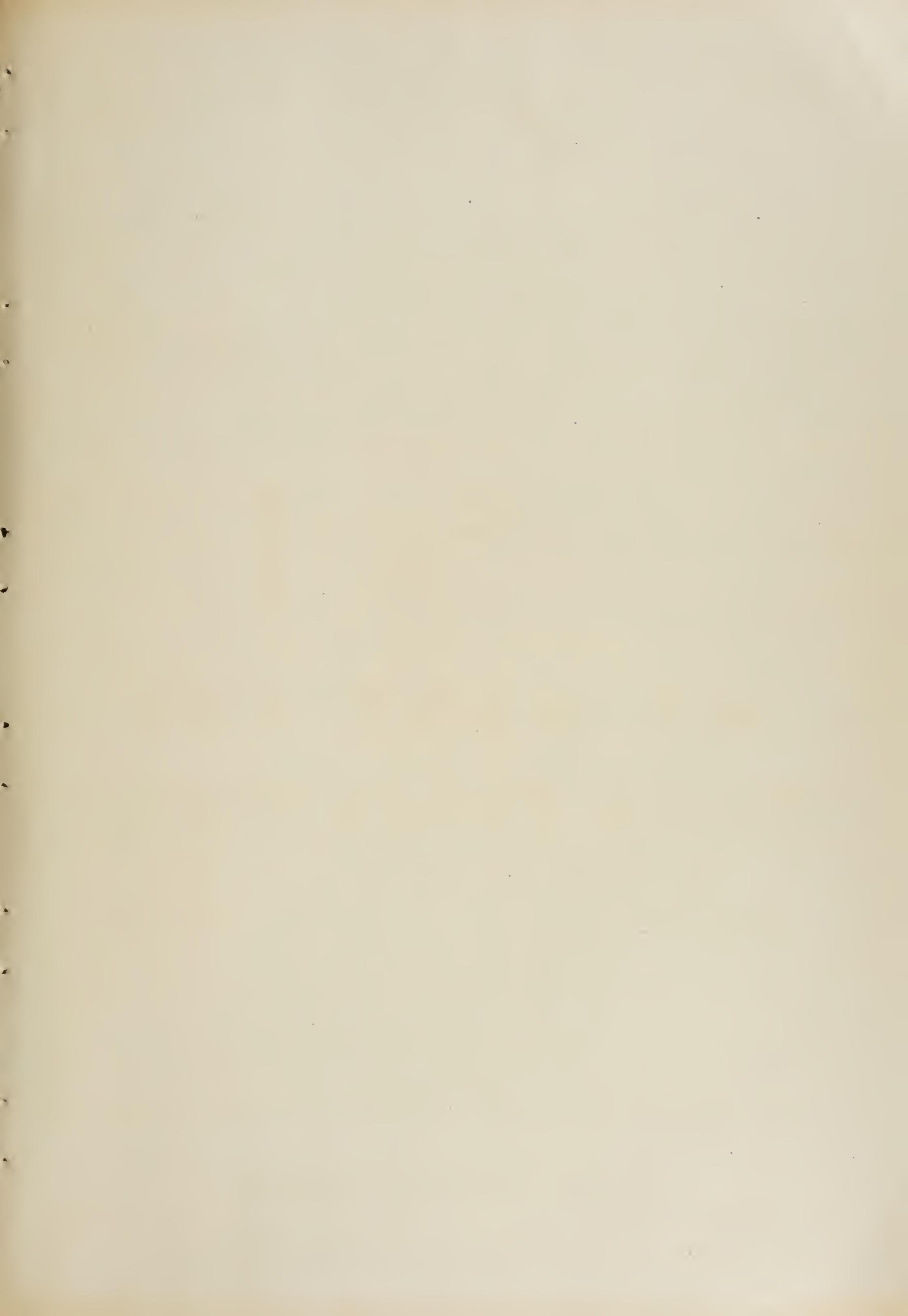
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